

**VERMONT COLLEGE OF NORWICH UNIVERSITY**

**LITERATURE AND SOCIAL CRITICISM:  
A CASE STUDY OF CANADIAN AUTHOR FARLEY MOWAT**

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To Farley and Claire, who inspired this project  
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J. David Towler  
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## CHAPTER 1

### ***Introduction***

By way of an introduction I would like to explain my interest in Farley Mowat and his works. I have always been an avid reader and read widely as a child. I read two of Mowat's children's books when I was quite young and he, as an author, stuck in my mind. When I was in first year at Trent University I heard an interview with Mowat on CBC's Radio Noon Phone-In. The topic was Mowat's recent expulsion from the United States after he attempted a visit to conduct a book-tour focusing on Sea Of Slaughter. I had not been aware of this incident. As a result of this interview, I bought the book, My Discovery Of America, in which Mowat related his U.S. border experience. After reading the book I wrote to Mr. Mowat expressing my sympathies for his experience and my admiration of the book. Much to my surprise and delight I received a personal reply from the author thanking me for my letter.

This past September when I was casting about for a suitable topic for research, I came across that 1985 letter from Farley Mowat and immediately began to investigate the feasibility of using him and his works as the focal point of my thesis. After conducting some preliminary research which included an extensive computer search of existing post-graduate theses, I discovered that never before had Mr. Mowat or his works been the focus of a degree thesis. I was establishing myself within a field which had never been investigated before and so decided to investigate Farley Mowat and his works.

## **Purpose & Thesis**

The purpose of this study is two-pronged, to present Canadian author Farley Mowat in two roles, as an environmentalist and as a social critic. Through an in-depth examination of his writings, his life, and the writings of others in reference to him, I will reveal Farley Mowat to be an Environmentalist and a Social Critic. I will also examine Mowat's place within the field of Canadian Literature. As well, I will demonstrate with specific examples from his works, his very strong sympathies for the treatment of earth's non-human inhabitants at the hands of humans and his notably provoked reactions against those he deems responsible for this treatment.

## **Method & Research Design**

The study will be conducted through a review of literary and popular criticisms of Farley Mowat, computer searches, personal interviews, McMaster University's archives of The Mowat Papers and special collections, readings of selected and related works, and by viewing selected video tapes and films about the author and based on his works. This study will be conducted as a Literary Bibliographic Survey. An extensive bibliography, consisting of over 180 entries, interviews with the author and individuals who know him, and several film sources will constitute the research material herein.

## **Definitions**

### **Environmentalist**

Farley Mowat is best known in Canada and abroad for his outspoken views concerning the welfare of our environment and those that inhabit it. However, before discussing Mowat in this capacity, one must have an understanding of the implications and use of the word 'Environmentalist'.

In order to understand the role of an Environmentalist one must first be able to understand and distinguish between the terms Environmentalist, Environmentalism, and Environmental studies. When asked for a definition of Environmentalist, professor Bob Gibson at the Department of Environmental Studies at the University of Waterloo stated, "There isn't one. It's [a term] adopted by people of conflicting view points. There is no politically or ethically common perspective other than respect for environmental well-being." However, Professor John Robinson, also from the Environmental Studies Department at Waterloo, explains that although there are a variety of different schools of thought on the subject, most academics subscribe to the following definitions of these terms. Robinson states that individuals engaging in environmental studies are generally considered to be academic scientists and while Environmentalism is seen as a social movement, an Environmentalist is an individual agitator.

Neither The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary nor Funk & Wagnalls Standard College Dictionary provide definitions for any derivative of "environment". Similarly Roget's II Thesaurus is equally unhelpful. Therefore, for the purposes of this paper the definition of Environmentalist will be that provided by Professor Robinson. For our purposes an Environmentalist is an individual agitator who is an active participant in environmental concerns and conservation. Although this person may be an amateur or concerned citizen, this need not necessarily be the case. Farley Mowat is an educated and knowledgeable man who cares deeply about the world we live in and the welfare of those with whom we share it. Mowat's writing reflects his strong belief in questioning authority and acting for animal welfare, for he has said in the past,

"I don't take myself seriously, but the things I write about I take very seriously" (Werier, 1985 p. 6).

### ***Social Critic***

In addition to his environmental writings, Farley Mowat is equally well known for his criticisms of modern society. A few of the books in which he best displays his observant

and critical eye are; Sea Of Slaughter, And No Birds Sang, and My Discovery Of America. However, Mowat argues that he is not only a *social critic* but also a critic of *anti-social behaviour*. He says,

"I'm not terribly interested in criticizing human society per se, in overall structure - but in detail yes. What I am is a critic of anti-social behaviour. And the human species has become the most anti-social form of life - of the social animals - on this planet. And that is extremely dangerous to us, and to every other form of life" (Interview, 1989).

Funk & Wagnalls Standard College Dictionary does not contain a definition of Social Critic or any derivative of it, nor does Roget's II The New Thesaurus offer an explanation or definition. In this paper what will be considered anti-social behaviour are activities criticized as being "opposed to or disruptive of society or the general good" (Funk & Wagnalls 1963, p. 65). Mowat's works will be examined within the context of social criticism, that is, criticism of government and or societal attitudes, injustices or unethical behaviours. As well, his works will be examined within the context of anti-social criticism, that is, criticism of anti-social behaviour.

## CHAPTER 2

### ***Farley Mowat - The Man And His Writings***

It must first be said that an attempt to research the background and life history of Farley Mowat should be embarked upon with an ample supply of salt and two very jaundiced eyes. This Canadian is a master of deception and evasion; almost nothing he says regarding himself or his own past can be accepted at face value. Mowat is evasive and speaks of himself with tongue planted securely in cheek. Always behind the humor, however, is a nugget of truth which may or may not parallel the facts.

According to Mowat he was conceived "under the grandstand of the Canadian National Exhibition" (The Mowat Papers, 1974, p. 2). However, it would seem that this is another of Mowat's famous evasions, for he has also claimed that he "was conceived in a green canoe on the Bay of Quinte and born in a taxi between Trenton and Belleville" (McDougall, 1980, p. 26). According to Official Records, Farley Mowat was born in Belleville Ontario in 1921. His conception has never been an issue. He moved frequently during his childhood, the family following his librarian father from job to job. By the time Mowat was eight he had moved about fourteen times and had lived for a time in, Trenton, Windsor, Saskatoon, Toronto and Richmond Hill. It was during these younger years that Farley Mowat fell under the influence of his Uncle Frank. It was Frank who first introduced the young Mowat to the Canadian Arctic. It was Frank too, who began Mowat's interest in ornithology; an interest which resulted in Mowat being the youngest person in Canada to hold a bird bander's permit in 1935 (De Montreville, 1972. p. 202). In a recent interview, Mowat described his relationship with his uncle and the influences that Frank had upon him.

"Well the way I felt about him was worshipful awe.... What Frank did for me was to legitimize a problem for me. I didn't get along with my fellow human beings of my age group for a variety of reasons,... so I turned more and more to the other animals. But I felt that this was somehow illegitimate, that it wasn't right that I should be doing that. And what he did was to legitimize my interest and affinity for other animals. 'Cause he was a big dominating guy and people respected him, and if it was all right for him to go out fiddling around and sniffing into bird's nests and so on, then it was OK for me" (Interview, 1989).

Mowat's father also had an influence on the young author. Angus had fought in the First World War and at the outbreak of W.W.II, he encouraged Farley to enter the forces as well. Mowat joined his father's old regiment the Hastings And Prince Edward Regiment (summarily dubbed the Hasty Pees by recruits) and spent the bulk of the war in Sicily under appalling conditions. These were the experiences which formed the text of his best-selling book And No Birds Sang (1979). However, the genesis of another book was also formed during those years. In order to escape the horrors which surrounded him, Mowat retreated to his childhood in Saskatchewan and recorded his reminiscences on a small portable typewriter. These pages eventually became The Dog Who Wouldn't Be. After the war Mowat retreated from his environment again. He explains his motivation in these words: "I came back...rejecting my species. I hated what had been done to me and what I had done and what man did to man" (McCall, 1980 p. 64). In order to distance himself from civilization Mowat worked as a specimen collector, which allowed him to venture as far from urbanized centers as he wished. He soon became dissatisfied, however, and he returned to the University of Toronto to continue his schooling. By his own account, he disliked the experience and never specialized. During this period, his interest in the Arctic was rekindled and in 1947 his love and curiosity of the Arctic drove him North again. Mowat was hired by the Federal Government, and worked for the Dominion Wildlife Service, spending time in the Arctic studying caribou and wolves. His experiences during this period were retold in his best-selling and most well-known book Never Cry Wolf. During the time he spent researching wolves Mowat discovered a forgotten band of starving and neglected Innuits, the People of the Deer. It was there in the Keewatin Barren Lands that he

found his first crusade and subsequently told their sad saga in his first book People of the Deer. These were his first crusades and ones which formed a pattern of behaviour that soon came to be a typical Mowat trait.

As a writer, Mowat's professional career began in 1952 with People of The Deer, relating his experiences in the Arctic and leveling harsh criticism at the existing government. This too became a typical "mowatism". He has never been known to pass up an opportunity to knock the establishment. It is precisely these outspoken views which have placed Mowat squarely within the sights of critics and admirers alike, while simultaneously expelling him from the ranks of the literary world.

From these verbose beginnings, Mowat has gone on to write over 30 books which have been published in over 20 different languages; including Swedish, German, Italian, Norwegian, Slovenia, Serbo-Croat, Russian, Rumanian, Polish, Dutch, Czech, Japanese, Hebrew, Hungarian, Chinese, Bulgarian, Portuguese, Finnish, French and Ukrainian. Most of the author's works are autobiographical in nature such as Owls in the Family (1961), The Dog Who Wouldn't Be (1957) and A Whale For The Killing (1972). The only true novels he has written have been for children. Lost In The Barrens (1956) and The Curse of The Viking's Grave (1966) are both adventure stories, and are the only books in which Mowat approaches the style of the traditional novelist. Mowat has been married twice and has two sons (one natural, one adopted) from his first marriage. His natural son Sandy, works for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in Toronto as Executive Producer of the program "Ontario Morning". Mowat and his first wife Francis have lost touch with their second son David, who was last reported to be living in Saskatchewan.

Mowat's ancestry is as distinguished as his writing career. His Great Grandfather, Sir Oliver Mowat was one of the Fathers of Confederation.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A.

During his career and in addition to his books, Farley Mowat has published innumerable commentaries and articles. He has been the recipient of The Governor General's Medal (1953), The Governor General's Award (1957), The Hans Christian Anderson International Award (1958), The Stephen Leacock Medal For Humor (1970), The Vicky Metcalf Award (1970), The Canadian Librarians' Association Book Of The Year Medal, The Mark Twain Award and the Canadian Centennial Medal (*Who's Who In The World*, 1986 p. 727). He has also been a recipient of Canada's highest literary award, the Order of Canada. Yet in spite of this, Mowat's books are rarely to be found listed alongside other Canadian works studied at the university level. There seems to be no clear reason for this. Although Mowat receives hundreds of invitations to speak publicly at environmental and educational functions throughout North America every year, his works have yet to be accepted by the academic community as worthy of study. Surely this man, who is Canada's most widely read and internationally recognized author deserves greater national consideration? Mowat explains his exclusion from Canada's literary establishment with characteristic candor, "They have decided what is valid writing and what is not," he snaps. "They've drawn the line so close to their own backsides that people like me are automatically excluded" (McCall, 1980 p. 66). Mowat disdains the literary establishment and his private writings reveal his reasons.

"I did not want to write *The Great Canadian Novel*. I did not want to be eulogized in the little magazines. Least of all did I want to be presented to long-suffering classes of undergraduates, by a professor of Literature, as a fit subject for dissection. I do not like dissection, nor disectors. And I don't think my works are robust enough to stand up to that kind of treatment. It would pain them, and me, and serve no useful purpose as, indeed, the dissection of a writer's works has *never* served any useful purpose" (The Mowat Papers, 1974).

This is an attitude that Mowat has maintained to the present. During my March interview with the author, when I questioned him about his awards, Mowat's response was;

"So what? Have you ever read the list of winners of the Stephen Leacock Award for Humor? ...Don't, it's pathetic. We don't know what humor is in this country at all. And we certainly don't know in the literary sense. I would say that the majority of the books chosen are totally unworthy of being called humor. It is not an elevating award. ...My reward comes from readership. I would rather have twenty-five letters over the period of a year from people who were moved by something I said. ...I would rather have that kind of recognition any day than an award" (Interview, 1989).

Farley Mowat's stature within the Canadian literary establishment will be examined shortly.

In addition to his abilities as a writer, Farley Mowat is "also a trained biologist, anthropologist, meteorologist, cartographer, and sailor" (Wardell, 1965, p. 11). He has employed all of these skills at one time or another in his writing and has proved time and again to be generally considered, Canada's favourite and best-loved author.

## CHAPTER 3

### ***Farley Mowat's Place Within The Fields Of Canadian Studies And Canadian Literature***

#### **Canadian Studies**

In order that this study be complete and comprehensive, it is necessary to examine Farley Mowat's role as a Canadian author within the fields of Canadian Studies and Canadian Literature.

One might assume that a thesis which studied a Canadian author and his works would naturally be placed within the field of Canadian Studies. However, this is not the case. Farley Mowat is a very difficult author to pigeon-hole by virtue of the fact that his writing spans so many different topics and concerns. This is further complicated by the fact that his writing is subjective non-fiction. This is an uncommon and little understood stylistic approach which sets him apart from other authors. One could argue that because Mowat is Canadian and writes in Canada, he is a worthy subject of study for students of Canadian Studies. However, Mowat does not write about Canada. He writes about whales, wolves, Innuits, owls, boats and gorillas, which, with few exceptions, are only Canadian by virtue of their geographical location at the time at which Mowat writes about them.

Professor Stan McMullin, Head of the Canadian Studies Department at the University of Waterloo, states that placing Mowat in the context of Canadian Studies is an academic prickly-pear and in fact, one might be better off trying to place him within the setting of Canadian Literature. Canadian Studies is generally considered to be the study of Canada in terms of its origins, history, politics, economics, identity and culture. Canadian literature on the other hand, entails the study of Canadian authors and their works, the subjects of which may or may not pertain to Canada, but often do. Professor

McMullin's description of Canadian Studies, in the Canadian Encyclopedia (1988) provides some explanation for his assertion that Mowat belongs in the second category.

"The use of the phrase "Canadian Studies" to designate a distinctive interdisciplinary approach to research and teaching about Canada owes much to the evolution of Canadian Nationalism in the 1960's and 1970's. A.B. Hodgetts examined the teaching of Canada in hundreds of schools and concluded, [that] "We are teaching a bland, unrealistic consensus version of our past; a dry-as-dust chronological story of uninterrupted political and economic progress told without the controversy that is an inherent part of history." (The Canadian Encyclopedia, 1988. p. 350).

Because Farley Mowat is a Canadian and a writer who often writes about Canadian subjects it is appropriate that he be examined within the context of Canadian Literature rather than Canadian Studies. An examination of Mowat's work reveals that his subjects are not heritage, culture or nationality. Therefore, it is not appropriate to place him within the context of Canadian Studies. Although Farley Mowat addresses concerns which pertain to Canada he also deals with subjects which demand the attention of every human being on the planet, not just Canadians. Hence, Farley Mowat is not only a figure in the field of Canadian Literature but has a wider, international appeal because he deals with global issues.

## **Canadian Literature**

In recent years Canadian Literature has gained status and importance as a subject of study within Canada and around the world. In 1986, Canadian authors Robertson Davies and Margaret Atwood were both finalists for Britain's Booker Prize. Within the past decade Hungary, Australia, Germany, Italy and Denmark have all hosted Canadian writing conferences, while at the same time courses on Canadian Literature are being taught in increasing numbers at universities and colleges across Canada and the United States (Stouck, 1988. p. ix). As Klinck points out, there has been a "colossal verbal explosion...[in literature] in Canada since 1960" (Klinck, 1976. p. 318).

The field of Canadian Literature is not only becoming recognized but is being embraced by the academic world. Many texts have become available to aid the interested reader, student, or researcher who wishes to study Canadian Literature. Because of this "verbal explosion" in Canada and the fact that Canadian Literature is finding a place within the international academic world, many Canadian academics have made attempts to more clearly define Canadian Literature and how to study it. Author and critic Eli Mandel, has addressed this topic and has attempted to explain what forms the basis of Canadian Literature as well as what good criticism of it should entail.

"It may be that Canadian concern with historiography, social structure, and esthetics can be viewed best as an expression of an almost paranoiac self-consciousness or simply as part of an attempt to understand the importance of communication theories in a demanding physical setting. Whatever the explanation for this obsession with self-definition and theoretical configurations, this much is obvious: any collection of critical essays that aspires to represent Canadian critical writing fairly and accurately will obviously present selections concerned not only with traditional comments on patterns of literary development but with the history and form of Canadian society..." (Mandel, 1971. p. vii).

Canadian Literature encompasses many areas and draws on every aspect of literature. As well, it takes into account history, esthetics, literary developments and patterns of societal formation within Canada. To fully understand the intricacies of Canada's Literature one must have an understanding of how Canadians think of themselves. In a recent television program, Bob Fulford, the editor of Saturday Night magazine explained the differences between Canadians and other nationalities in terms of how we think of ourselves and our country.

"Canada is a place that cannot be said to have developed a consensus about even its own past, even the most important moments in its past. In certain countries, many countries, there are key moments in the national past which everyone agrees upon, that everyone is expected to agree about. The French Revolution for example, Britain's victory over Hitler would be another example, the Revolutionary war in the United States is another example. Most countries have these key moments which provide them with ideology, a unified point of view, a something to begin with when they begin talking about their history or their life or why they're doing

what they're doing. We [Canada] haven't got that." (Bob Fulford *in True North*, National Film Board of Canada, 1987).

Because this is true of Canada and the way Canadians think, this sets Canadian Literature apart from other forms of literature and allows it to take on a unique and individualistic form.

Another aspect of Canadian Literature is regionalism. This is a very Canadian-specific form of writing which is also a direct result of being Canadian. Saturday Night magazine staff member Gary Ross, and editor Bob Fulford explained how regionalism is integrally a part of being Canadian.

"Canadians tend to be a people whose critical question of self-identity is not 'Who am I?' but rather 'Where is here?'" (Gary Ross *in True North*, National Film Board of Canada, 1987).

Bob Fulford explains further,

"Why try to sum up Canada in terms of places? Because that's how Canadians think of their country. An American may think of the Founding Fathers and the Declaration of Independence as a key element, the very thing that makes America *America* and not something else. Canadians don't think of the BNA [British North America] Act that way, nor do we think of the Battle on the Plains of Abraham that way. What we think of is our relationship with this part or that part [of Canada]. In some cases with a pan-Canadian, a really completely enthusiastic country-covering Canadian, it may be twenty-five places in the country he thinks of when somebody says Canada" (Bob Fulford *in True North*, National Film Board of Canada, 1987).

As a result of this outlook, Canadian writing tends to be very specific in terms of the locations about which authors write. Mowat's work stands out clearly in this area. He has written specifically in and about such areas as the Keewatin Barren Lands, Newfoundland, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba as well as specific locations in Italy, Siberia and Africa. David Stouck addressed this location-fixation in Canadian authors, as follows,

"Many of Canada's writers are still engaged in creating a literary map of the country, revealing in imaginative language what Canada looks like, what it means to grow up in and be a part of a specific region. While this remains a central concern in Canadian Literature, interest in the work of writers whose inspiration comes from outside the country will lag behind. The best of this work will eventually come to have its place in the tradition of Canadian Literature, just as the writings of women, blacks, and other minority groups have found a significant place in the once white, male-dominated tradition of literature of the United States" (Stouck, 1988. p. 299).

Thus, it is clear that Farley Mowat fits into the field of Canadian Literature. He has written extensively about both the north and the eastern seaboard. He is both, a Canadian writer, writing about Canada, and a regionalist. On many occasions Mowat has been both a regionalistic writer and an historian since he writes books which encompass both regional esthetics and the history of societal formation in Canada. These are central issues to Canadian Literature.

Although Mowat is certainly worthy of study within the context of Canadian Literature, it is unfortunately true that he is largely excluded by the literary community in this country. Even in texts dealing with Canadian Literature, it is difficult to locate material dealing with Mowat and his works. Those works that can be found, give only the briefest attention to him, and only after referring to one or two of his books when comparing him to another author. Two authors who do give Mowat some of the attention he deserves, are Elizabeth Waterston in Survey: A Short History Of Canadian Literature and Margaret Atwood in Survival: A Thematic Guide To Canadian Literature.

Waterston addresses the crux of Mowat's Canadianism by examining the phenomenon of Canadian writers who deal with "man and his environment" (Waterston, 1973. p. 13).

"The Canadian terrain today is very different from the clean, cold, rock-bound shore first seen by English voyagers around 1600. Modern eyes see a polluted nature. Rivers and seas are contaminated, prairies single-cropped too long, harvests blighted by the world's hunger, snow scored by snowmobiles. All these views simmer in modern writing on man and his

environment. Farley Mowat may be fiercest in protest and most widely read; he is backed in every medium by other Canadian writers" (Waterston, 1973. p. 13).

However briefly, Waterston addresses Mowat's environmental stand, she equates Mowat with Margaret Avison and Sheila Watson as writers who view the environment as fragile and in need of protection, not destruction by humankind.

In Survival, Margaret Atwood devotes more attention to Mowat and notes his role as an author of animal stories. Atwood's third chapter, "Animal Victims" deserves discussion. In this chapter she reveals an interesting and vital component which is inherent in Canadian animal-literature. Atwood quotes several Canadian authors who comment on our attitudes towards animals. Exemplary of the Canadian approach which Atwood later explores is this comment by Seton.

"Have the wild things no moral or legal rights? What right has man to inflict such long and fearful agony on a fellow-creature, simply because that creature does not speak his language?" (Seton *in* Atwood, 1972. p. 71).

Atwood states that,

"The 'realistic' animal story, as invented and developed by Ernest Thompson Seton and Sir Charles G.D. Roberts, is not, as Alec Lucas would have it in A Literary History of Canada, 'a rather isolated and minor kind of literature,' but a *genre* [italics mine] which provides a key to an important facet of the Canadian psyche" (Atwood, 1972. p. 73).

It is important to note that Margaret Atwood feels that this style of writing is "distinctively Canadian" (Atwood, 1972. p. 73). It is a style that Farley Mowat uses. Atwood also examines British literature such as Kipling's Mowgli stories, Kenneth Grahame's The Wind In The Willows and Beatrix Potter's tales and makes the distinction that animal characters in these stories are essentially "...Englishmen in furry zippered suits, often with a layer of human clothing added on top." (Atwood, 1972. p. 95) She examines the tendency of British writers to personify their animal protagonists to the extent that they

not only wore clothes, but also spoke perfect English and had places within a hierarchical social order. Atwood also points out the invariably happy endings.

American writers, on the other hand, treat animals in quite a different way. Atwood notes that, in American literature, animals are bereft of the ability to speak, wear no clothing and are seldom the centre of the action. She points out that in American Literature, animals are usually the goal within the context of hunting stories with the hunter as the hero. Atwood cites Moby Dick, the bear in Faulkner's The Bear, the lion in Hemingway's The Short And Happy Life of Francis Macomber, as well as Norman Mailer's and James Dickey's works as examples. She labels these works as animal success-stories in terms of the animal's adjustment to people (Atwood, 1972. p. 74). In this context she cites Jack London's White Fang as an example. When she turns her attention towards Canadian writing, the style she refers to as "distinctively Canadian" (Atwood, 1972. p. 73) becomes readily apparent.

Canadian animal stories such as Seton and Roberts wrote are not success-stories but rather failure stories,

"...ending with the death of the animal; but this death, far from being the accomplishment of a quest, to be greeted with rejoicing, is seen as tragic or pathetic, *because the stories are told from the point of view of the animal*. That's the key: English animal stories are about "social relations," American ones are about people killing animals; Canadian ones are about animals *being killed*, as felt emotionally from inside the fur and feathers" (Atwood, 1972. p. 74).

This is the style of Farley Mowat. A style which he has utilized over and over again and one he has used to great advantage in A Whale For The Killing. In True North, Margaret Atwood sums up her opinion of Canadians' relationship to nature and this reflects the views expressed above with respect to Canadian nature-writing.

"There does seem to be this collective feeling for animals. Notice what we put on [our] money. So that on one hand, although Canada was built on dead beavers, the fur trade, on the other hand we seem to have

developed a fellow feeling for nature, not as a big awesome thing that is going to do you in, but as something that needs your help" (Atwood *in True North*, National Film Board of Canada, 1987).

It is also this empathic stance which confronts the reader in Sea of Slaughter. Mowat's own comments about this book reveal his own understanding of the writing style he employs. Speaking specifically about the effect it had on him Mowat explains how difficult the book was to finish.

"The most difficult book I ever attempted to write was Sea of Slaughter...because I got more and more depressed as I did the research and as I discovered the enormity of the disaster we had visited upon life on this planet. ...nobody can read it. It was almost impossible to write because it's unreadable. In essence, it's just one hammer blow after another on the psyche of Homo Sapiens" (Interview, 1989).

These "hammer blow[s]" are the force within Mowat's work. They are the medium through which Mowat delivers his message and they are also transmitters of the empathic pain the reader feels through the animal characters in the books.

Farley Mowat is a part of a group of Canadian writers who internalize the emotions of their animal protagonists. It is important that this difference exists between Canadian writers and those of other nationalities. It is also important to understand and acknowledge that differences such as this exist in every aspect of Canadian Literature.

A second point which Atwood brings to bear on the differences between Canadian and foreign authors is the Canadian's ability to begin "with neutral observation and [arrive] at identification..." (Atwood, 1972. p. 95). As examples she cites Al Purdy and Farley Mowat, referring specifically to Mowat's People Of The Deer. She points out that Canadian authors tend to "...immerse [themselves] in the forest [with] the alien people, returning to tell [their] story" (Atwood, 1972. p. 96). In this discussion she refers directly to Mowat's People Of The Deer and Emily Carr's Klee Wyck. Both of these stories deal with a white protagonist entering an alien (Innuit) society which is being or has been

disrupted by white men. These authors find themselves looking and empathizing but able to do nothing. They can define the problem but can't solve it (Atwood, 1972. p. 96).

These are the distinctions which arise between Canadian and foreign literature. Canadian authors write about the world from an isolated view, selecting a specific region or people as their subject and giving that subject full rein within their book. As well, these authors write with an eye to history, esthetics, literary developments and patterns of societal formation.

A third distinction which separates Canadian authors from their international peers arises in the form of authors examining "man and his environment" (Waterston, 1973. p. 13). Among these environmental authors are, Margaret Avison, Sheila Watson, Pierre Berton and Farley Mowat. Canadian authors have also developed a writing style which Atwood refers to as "distinctively Canadian," that being, the tendency to write books about animals from the animal protagonist's point of view. Atwood states in True North, "even as far back as the beginning of the twentieth century, Canadians were writing animal stories in which the animal was the hero and the person hunting the animal was the villain" (Atwood in True North, National Film Board of Canada, 1987). In referring directly to authors such as Farley Mowat, this is perhaps the most important distinction which can be applied to Canadian writers.

The fourth major distinction to be made, is that many Canadian authors have entered into alien or native societies and emerged later to tell the native's story. Authors of this type include, Emily Carr, George Ryga, Margaret Laurence and Farley Mowat.

The evidence presented by these critics places Canadian Literature in an unusual light. Canadian literature is distinct in ways which are subtle and only apparent when compared with the literature of other nations. It is difficult to define exactly what makes Canadian Literature different and even more difficult to assign Mowat a specific role or niche within the genre. These difficulties arise from the fact that Mowat himself refuses to be pigeon-holed, calling himself a sagaman, and also from the fact that his writing

falls into almost every area of Canadian Literature. Mowat's books can be placed in such categories as history, social criticism, biology, regionalism and environmentalism. Therefore, to place Farley Mowat accurately within a continuum is next to impossible. An easier and perhaps more fruitful task is to place him in the company of authors who have delved into similar areas, expressing similar views. Farley Mowat is a unique Canadian author and a writer whose works encompass a wide range of topics within Canadian Literature. However, his works also place him outside the literary establishment. At the same time, his works have earned him an international reputation and a well-deserved place in the history of literature in this country. Although seldom studied, Mowat is both popular and widely read.

## CHAPTER 4

### ***Criticisms of Farley Mowat***

#### **The Reviews**

Throughout his career as a writer, Farley Mowat has been subjected to widespread criticism brought about by the argumentative and whistle-blowing attitude so often an integral part of his makeup and his writing. However, strangely enough these criticisms have all been in the form of popular periodicals, and this becomes a problem when researching an author critically. With the exception of Farley Mowat by Alec Lucas (1976) and an article by James Overton in the Journal of Canadian Studies (1987), there have been no attempts by the literary establishment to seriously critique Mowat's works. This is explained through Farley Mowat's exclusion from the literary world, and thus he passes unseen by the eyes of literary critics.

Although Lucas and Overton have been the only literary critics to examine Farley Mowat, it is interesting to note that the two authors were published eleven years apart. In addition, Overton examined only one title, A Whale For The Killing, while Lucas critiqued over twelve. Mowat had written over five books including the award-winning Boat Who Wouldn't Float and the internationally acclaimed Virunga when Overton published his criticism. This raises the question; why would Overton examine one of Mowat's works so long after its publication? That he was comparing A Whale For The Killing with the movie of the same title is not sufficient justification since the film premiered in 1981 - six years before Overton's article. Thus Overton's failure to examine recent publications and the literary establishment's obvious lack of interest between 1976 and 1987 add credence to the argument that Mowat himself proposed, "People like me are automatically excluded" (McCall, 1980 p. 66).

An additional problem in critiquing Mowat is posed by the fact that his writing does not lend itself to critiques of what we consider to be typical topics within literature. Aside from my own observations, I have found that I must rely on the information provided by book reviews, interviews and articles in popular periodicals. Of these, very few criticize Mowat in what is considered a literary format. In addition to these difficulties, there is very little negative criticism of Mowat other than poorly presented nutshell-synopses in book reviews.

It is interesting to note that those articles which *do* criticize Mowat are (as Mowat would say) of the "kill-em" schools. I have collected and examined four reviews/criticisms of Sea of Slaughter (1984) and only one was highly critical. The author, I.D. Thompson, writing for the Canadian Forestry Service, complains that the book is inaccurate and subjects the reader to wild "exaggeration, innuendo and misrepresentation" on Mowat's part. Thompson specifically refutes several of Mowat's claims, arming himself with so-called 'accurate' statistics. He also accuses Mowat of playing "a deceptive numbers game: by taking the upper value of the estimated historical population range and the lower value of the current estimated range, he makes a decline seem worse than it may be" (Thompson, 1987 p. 502). In closing, Thompson attacks Mowat directly saying,

"[He] has a much better soap-box than most of us who actively seek to promote conservation of wildlife. ...A far greater contribution could have been made had the writer come down from his white horse and dealt with the actual difficulties of resource management" (Thompson, 1987 p. 503).

Thompson seems to have overlooked the fact that Mowat was attempting to chronicle the decline (and in some cases the extinction) of specific species of North American wildlife at the hands of humankind and not the pros and cons of resource management. In fairness, however, Thompson does praise Mowat's descriptive powers and "well-researched history of the appalling commercial destruction of wildlife species in North America..." (Thompson, 1987 p. 503).

However, we must weigh these opinions carefully for Mowat also refutes many claims made by wildlife management organizations. He claims his own statistics in Sea of Slaughter (produced through five years of research) are infallible. Even if Mowat has once again refused to allow the 'facts to interfere with the truth' what harm has he done? If anything, his book is a benefit and if his figures are slightly off-centre, the consequences of our past actions remain unaltered. Thus Thompson's clinical and statistical view of resource management pales into insignificance when compared with Mowat's emotional and *widely publicized* plea for awareness of the past and action for the present. Mowat knowingly leaves himself open to these kinds of attacks because, as he himself says, "If you tell the truth as you see it, you're bound to be controversial" (Urich, 1982. p. 10).

As for Thompson (as well as those who follow), Mowat would most likely classify them as members of the type of government agencies he refers to in his 1982 Maclean's article Politics Kill Seals Don't They?. In this characteristically verbose article Mowat says:

"It is true, of course, that sea mammals do eat fish, although for the most part these are non commercial varieties. But by carefully creating and selecting figures that suit its purpose the Department [of fisheries and oceans] labors [to] make it appear that seals are a competitor we simply can't afford. *I have examined their statistical proofs and I am here to tell you that many are badly biased and some are downright dishonest*" (Maclean's, 1982 p. 10). [Italics Mine]

Thus in essence, Mowat has adroitly reversed the accusation and placed the shoe on the foot of Thompson and those of his ilk by accusing them of doing exactly what they have accused him of. However, the important point to make here is that Mowat made his accusation first, which raises the likely possibility that retaliation as a means of covering their backsides, is the principal motivation on the part of the Federal agencies.

This attitude, it would seem, is universal among the government agencies and anti-environmental groups which are ridiculed by Mowat. Alaska Magazine which caters to

so-called 'sport hunters', recently ran an article by Jim Rearden, the magazine's outdoors editor. Rearden decimated Mowat's Never Cry Wolf in his 1985 article Fairy Tales And Wolves. The self-serving bias with which Rearden writes is, by itself, enough to cause one to doubt his credibility. Rearden informs the reader that Dr. A.W.F. Banfield had Mowat as an assistant in 1948-49 participating in a caribou study during which Mowat "made the observations he wrote about in Never Cry Wolf." Rearden gushes in his praise of Banfield, describing him in such ways as: "retired" after a "distinguished career" and as an "unsung oracle" who "is always a gentleman."

Both Rearden and Banfield refute and discount Never Cry Wolf as completely untrue. Banfield states:

"It is certain that not since 'Little Red Riding Hood' has a story been written that will influence the attitude of so many toward these animals [wolves]. I hope the readers of Never Cry Wolf will realize that both stories have about the same factual content" (Rearden, 1985. p. 27).

Banfield goes on to state that Mowat is a liar and a plagiarist. According to Banfield, the field instructions Mowat ridiculed were "not exactly those that Banfield wrote." As well "the parody on equipment, as described by Mowat, didn't happen." Rearden supports Banfield's attack on Mowat adding that;

"During Mowat's indoctrination period in Ottawa, he was given several books to read, including Adolph Murie's 1944 classic, The Wolves of Mount McKinley. 'Any resemblance between Never Cry Wolf and that book is *not* coincidental,' wrote Banfield in his review" (Rearden, 1985 p. 27).

Rearden also acquired the aid of Douglas H. Pimlott, yet another "prominent Canadian scientist." Pimlott also refutes Never Cry Wolf, saying, that "the grain of truth was that Mowat did work for the Wildlife Service and he did observe wolves," calling the rest "a blend of fancy, fantasy and the published data of other workers, to whom no reference is made in the book" (Rearden, 1985 p. 74).

Pimlott (who Rearden says is "ever the serious scientist") takes time to refute even Mowat's satires.

"[The Canadian Wildlife Service] never had a man who had been studying ground hogs since 1897, they never had a man who studied rattlesnakes in the southern Saskatchewan desert; they have never had a predation control division: they never send a man on a field-trip loaded down with lab equipment" (Rearden, 1985 p. 74).

Rearden sums up, saying that, "There is danger in believing Mowat's thesis, [and that] the American public should be used to the distortions of Hollywood and of book publishers peddling fact as fiction..." (Rearden, 1985 p. 75).

Rearden's article calls to mind the typical Hollywood stereotype of scientists; that of, thin bespeckled men sporting goatees and serious expressions, carefully and humourlessly dissecting animals for science. I believe this approximates Mowat's view of the scientific community and administrative bodies in general. "By definition," Mowat says "a bureaucrat can't have a sense of humor. If he did, he wouldn't be a bureaucrat" (Chamberlain, 1985 p. 33).

After reading Rearden's article, Mowat replied;

"I don't really bother to respond to that type of criticism. A plagiarist - because I have used other people's...experiences? I've built on other people's experiences sure, and I will continue to do so. ...Basically the criticism is that I wasn't a scientist. Well I'm *not* a scientist,...I'm a writer of subjective-non fiction. Banfield of course has every reason to dislike me intensely because I make a mock of him in Never Cry Wolf. He was the epitome of the academic scientist concerned with his career, and I laughed at him. And of course people don't forgive that. That kind of criticism means almost nothing to me. It used to get me angry. Now it doesn't even get me angry" (Interview, 1989).

Mowat has shown himself to be very secure in his position as a controversial author, taking his criticism in stride and by and large ignoring the bulk of it. As with most aspects of the author, his sense of humor extends even to his critics. When he recalled

that Douglas H. Pimlott had died since the publication of Fairy Tales And Wolves, Mowat shrugged his shoulders and said with an impish grin, "There you are, I'm outliving them all" (Interview, 1989).

However, the sheer force of such refutations and personal attacks by these critics leads one to ask, just how close to the truth Mowat struck to produce such strong reactions? As the criticisms of Mowat and his work have shown thus far, it would appear that the agencies he accuses take great pains to silence him in the form of no-holds-barred character assassination. This justifies the impression that Mowat's work bears more fact than fiction, and such vehement recriminations only serve to strengthen his own accusations.

Another critic, Elinor Langer, also takes Mowat to task in her 1977 article Through The Arctic With Farley Mowat. However, there are distinctions to be made between her criticism and that of Rearden and Thompson. She is more circumspect and judicious in her comments, and this may arise from the fact that she admits, "I have never been north of the 49th parallel." Langer is scrupulously fair in her appraisal of Mowat's work admitting that;

"...if I am an armchair Arctic observer, Farley Mowat is not; and if his work has limitations, as I think it does, it is nonetheless an unusual contribution that consists of opening up an invisible territory to public witness almost as concretely as if he were a trainman conducting tours through the wilderness" (Langer, 1977 p. 52).

She is lavish in her praise of Mowat's stand, noting his metamorphosis from "a government biologist to a ...scribe for all the quiet species of the north..." (Langer, 1977 p. 53). She goes on to explain how this came about through a short examination of the events which led Mowat to write People Of The Deer.

Langer also takes time to examine some of Mowat's other works and acknowledges the fact that, "Mowat is not essentially a political writer, but his naturalist's anger at what he has seen taking place has led him to write at least two books in which he attempts to

relate biological and ecological conditions to political and economic ones" (Langer, 1977 p. 57). When examining The Siberians she backs-up Mowat's favourable impressions of the Soviet Arctic, explaining that;

"...the Soviet Union is not the only country that offers a contrast to the Canadian example. Under Danish administration the development of the Eskimos of Greenland is far more like those of Russia than like those of Canada - a story of assimilation and accomplishment rather than of isolation and decay" (Langer, 1977 p. 58).

However, she spikes her praise with a barb of skepticism, saying "...The Siberians is an astonishing book, and...in some places it is so astonishing it is literally incredible..." (Langer, 1977 p. 58).

In the course of her discussion, Langer also offers a partial explanation for Mowat's exclusion from the literary establishment. As she explains;

"He deliberately puts himself in a relation to things to which in our time only specialists usually have access, and he pursues them with a lack of intimidation that modern scholarship not only fails to approach, it positively forbids" (Langer, 1977 p. 59).

However, as before, she tempers her amiability with critique, explaining that,

"...his books have all the usefulness of scholarship without the limits of the scholarly point of view. But the truth is that I am squeamish about his popularizations. I think, perhaps unrealistically, that if I am taking the trouble as a reader, to get the gist I might as well take the additional trouble to get it straight" (Langer, 1977 p. 59).

At this point, however, Langer's discussion abruptly takes an alternate direction. It is particularly important to emphasize at this stage that Elinor Langer is the only critic of Mowat who has examined his work from a female perspective. It is here in her conclusions, that she begins to take the harder stance which we have already seen displayed by Rearden and Thompson. Langer's criticism at this point cannot be dismissed as a stereotypically reactionary feminist point of view. Her point is well taken.

No other critic has questioned or criticized the way in which Mowat deals with women in his books. Langer notes;

"...just as I think Mowat frequently sacrifices precision for the gist, I think he sacrifices it also for the joke, a characteristic even harder to overlook, because his sense of humor is dominated by a positively juvenile smirkiness about women. The sexual atmosphere of his books, although it is always in the background, is approximately that of the playground at recess. If his observations of other forms of life were as limited as his observations of male-female relations among his own kind, his work would be quite useless" (Langer, 1977 p. 59).

However, during my interview with Mr. Mowat, when asked to comment on Langer's criticisms he replied;

"I don't write about women because I'm very uncomfortable writing about love. ...I can write about love of other animals, but I have great difficulty in writing about love of my own kind. That is to say sexual love. ...It's never been an area which was important to me as a writer so I haven't worried about it. But as far as my sense of humour is concerned, screw her! I've got a goddamned better sense of humour than she has!" (Interview, 1989)

As I investigated Farley Mowat and criticisms of him, I discovered that he is incredibly thick-skinned. During my interview with him, he was scrupulously fair in discussing whether a particular criticism was accurate or not. It appeared that the angrier and more personal a criticism was, the less notice Mowat gave it. And this is a point which must be addressed. It is quite clear that Farley Mowat is far more concerned with what he is doing and how his en masse audience is responding, than he is with the attitudes shown by his critics. According to Mowat, "the part of a writer's life that matters is his audience or her audience, not the critics - they're the fleas on the elephant. As long as your audience is responding you're doing what you should be doing" (Interview, 1989). It is quite clear from the many boxes of fan-mail in the McMaster University Archives that Mowat's audience is definitely responding.

Langer concludes her discussion of Mowat with 'softer' criticism, conceding that "Farley Mowat is not, perhaps, the sage of the Arctic. He is more emotional than detached; he

is more often self-righteous than self-critical; he is more often passionate than wise" (Langer, 1977 p. 59). However, to criticize the critic, one must ask - do not these same qualities elicit the national and international acclaim with which Mowat's works are synonymous? Are not Mowat's emotional and passionate writings his best and most successful at eliciting similar responses from his readers?

I am of the opinion that were it not for Farley Mowat's self-righteous and passionate views, his work would indeed be useless. Unfortunately, this is the cross which all rebels must bear - to be venerated as heroes by some and disdained as pariahs by others. We can only hope that unlike most rebels (or prophets) Farley Mowat's words will *not* be proven true by the passage of time, and that our species will acknowledge him at present as the voice of reason he has always proven himself to be. To quote Bishop Richard Corbet (1582-1685), "Let others write for glory or reward. Truth is well paid when she is sung and heard" (Mitchell, 1985 p. 157).

## Alec Lucas

The remaining portion of this chapter is devoted to Alec Lucas, who is the most circumspect of Mowat's critics. Lucas is the second and final critic to emerge from the ranks of the literary establishment and also provides an in-depth criticism of a large number of Mowat's works. Mr. Lucas' 61 page book, Farley Mowat, was written in 1976, and investigates the author in the following ways. Lucas looks at Mowat as a Crusader, an Historian, a Mariner, and a Creative Writer, in that order. Throughout these four areas Lucas examines Farley Mowat within the context of fourteen of his works, beginning with the first People Of The Deer, and ending with his last, (to 1976), Wake Of The Great Sealers.

In his introduction, Lucas makes an important point which many critics have overlooked. "Pessimist as he [Mowat] says he is about the future of mankind, his persistent crusades, however, give his statement the lie. He is neither a cynic nor a hand-wringing sentimentalist and as a social critic axiomatically reveals that he writes from hope and not despair" (Lucas, 1976 p. 4).

I believe this to be perhaps the most accurate statement made to date, in connection with Farley Mowat and his work. Despite what Mowat himself may say in opposition, it is clear to not only his readers and admirers, but also his critics that Farley Mowat has a deep-seated love for his planet and all of his fellows, human and non-human. This factor is perhaps also the most salient and most easily recognized quality of Mowat's writing. One cannot believe that a person such as Mowat could be driven as hard and for as long as he has been by despair. It is obvious that Lucas has hit upon an important point. He has stripped away one of Mowat's many protective barriers, and in doing so has revealed an optimist in pessimist's clothing.

## A Crusader

Farley Mowat has always been a crusader and a backer of causes. Ever since he wrote an article on the mating habits of Ruddy Ducks while only a boy in Saskatchewan<sup>2</sup> (a trade-secret which he says he has never been forgiven for revealing) Farley Mowat has been his own man. He has written from his own experiences and interests without attempting to satisfy any one particular audience. Says Lucas, "He opposes all practices and policies which deny or ignore the rights of those who live at the mercy of an urbanized and technological society [drawing no distinction between human and non-human]" (Lucas, 1976 p. 6).

However, it is merely a question of semantics. Mowat himself argues that animals *do not have rights*. He says that the word is bad,

"I'm not sure there is a phrase that would cover it. But they [animals] have at least equal - claim, to be allowed to survive and function according to their structures, their laws - which are the natural laws - with us. The claims are equal, we have no superior claims" (Interview, 1989).

Mowat's attitude towards native and indigenous peoples reflects the view he holds regarding animal rights; this is not to say that Mowat views them as one and the same but rather that their claims to unhindered existence and survival are equal. In this first chapter, Lucas examines Mowat's crusades with an emphasis on People Of The Deer, Sibir, Never Cry Wolf and A Whale For The Killing. In doing so he supports a number of Mowat's views and actions, but at the same time launches a heavy barrage of well-aimed criticism at the author.

Lucas describes the Governmental ineptitudes which drove Mowat to distraction and launched him into his first crusade on behalf of the Ihalmiut band of Eskimos in the Barrens. Lucas explains,

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<sup>2</sup> See On Being Farley Mowat, Maclean's. 1971.

"The Civil Service came under even heavier fire than the church, its faults including, among others, bungling, parsimony, dishonesty, and egregious indifference, if not cruelty. Supplies for the starving natives arrived at the wrong place or never arrived. Ottawa had no policy except paternalism, which it left to the church, because it saved money, and to the R.C.M.P. another untouchable, because it saved bother" (Lucas, 1976, p. 10).

In an excerpt from the film, In Search Of Farley Mowat, Mowat explains his reasons for writing the book and taking on the Ihalmiut's cause.

"Having lived amongst these people and having seen the inhumanity with which they were being treated by us, by our culture, I became incensed and very irate about it... They had given me something. They had given me an extraordinary gift. They had given me ease, they had given me some renewed faith in my own kind and they had opened the world to me and I *bloody well* owed them something. And there was no goddamned way I was going to see them put down as they were being put down, literally into extinction, by the stupidities and lack of perceptions and inward looking of our kind of people" (In Search Of Farley Mowat, National Film Board Of Canada, 1981).

As a result of these (and other accusations) Mowat came under tremendous fire from the Federal Government who disputed Mowat's accuracy on a grand scale. One A.E. Porsild submitted that Mowat had never been to the north and even went so far as to deny the existence of the Ihalmiut people! (Lucas, 1976. p. 11). Lucas affirms however, that even *if* Mowat exaggerated the death rates of the natives or placed too much blame on one institution or another, the fact remained that the white man had destroyed the Ihalmiut way of life and was doing little to aid them now while many of them were dying horribly. The major criticism of People Of The Deer made by Mowat's critics (and subsequently Lucas), was that (as has continued to be the case) Mowat's accuracy was in question. Mowat's initial defence (which he has continued to use) was that "It matters little whether things happened as they are said to have happened....Never let the facts stand in the way of the truth" (Lucas, 1976, p. 12). Mowat is speaking very specifically when he says this, however, and it is important to understand that he has never tried to pass off fiction as truth. He *has*, however, altered the facts in ways which do not, from

his perspective, interfere with the truth. Mowat's publisher Jack McClelland, explains the way in which Mowat does this.

"When we finally got The Boat Who Wouldn't Float ready for our first venture to sea on a trial, we were in a small Newfoundland out-port... And [everyone] was lined up to watch these newcomers take this schooner out, and they were all sea-people, and they were waiting to laugh. Farley describes it in the book, he says, "We sailed out of the harbour backwards." Well we didn't sail out of the harbour backwards but we *felt* as though we were. We felt so inept and so nervous in front of this professional audience that we might as well have been sailing the boat out backwards. But that is the sort of point I've made, where Farley believes in truth not fact, and the truth was we *felt* as if we were sailing the boat out backwards" (Interview, 1989).

That is the distinction here, the facts are not important. The manipulation of the event is done in such a way that it does not change the essence of the message or 'truth' which Mowat attempts to impart.

When reading People Of The Deer it is obvious Farley Mowat is not one who writes from pessimism or despair. He has demonstrated time and time again since then, his readiness to lend his hand to causes, regardless of whether the individuals involved be human (with the distinction of being natural man) or animal.

Lucas continues his examination of Mowat the Crusader, with an examination of Sibir and Never Cry Wolf, in both of which, he says, Mowat attempts to dispel myths. However, Lucas seems to harbour much the same attitudes towards Sibir and Mowat's humour as did Elinor Langer. In his description of the book and its contents Lucas comes to much the same conclusions that Langer did earlier. Most of Mowat's descriptions of Russia are so praiseworthy and without any shadow of negativity, that they become hard to believe. Lucas points out that in spite of Mowat's efforts to demonstrate the freedom enjoyed in Siberia, he finds it necessary to hide the names of individuals who speak critically of communism, lest Moscow hear of them (Lucas, 1976, p. 18). It is hard to defend the author when faced with truths such as these. Mowat would likely have us believe that the sentiments and meanings are more important than

the facts, and this would be supported by his past works. However, this is a different situation - or is it? Unlike past controversies, such as the Barrenland Eskimos or the Keewatin wolves, it is not as simple in this case for others to refute or substantiate Mowat's claims. However, in previous cases Mowat's assertions were proven to be true. The Ihalmiut were indeed starving and the wolves were *not* ravaging thousands of caribou. Why then are we so ready to dismiss Mowat's experiences in Siberia as false and inaccurate? Perhaps the answer lies in the words of one of Mowat's Soviet correspondents who stated

"Propaganda in the west is carried on by experts who have had the best training in the world...we Russians are not, by nature a gullible people. We are suspicious of what we cannot see for ourselves. I think the fundamental difference between our two worlds with regard to propaganda, is quite simple. You tend to believe yours...and we tend to disbelieve ours" (Sibir, 1970, pp. 78-9).

If this statement is true and accurate, then this raises the question of biases on the part of Alec Lucas; biases created as a result of our expert propaganda.

Lucas' other criticism with regard to Sibir was Mowat's humour. It is important to note that Lucas is the first *male* critic to attack Mowat's sense of humour, in the same way as did Elinor Langer. In reference to Sibir, Lucas cites Mowat for "lapses into a form of bathroom comedy, for Mowat seems somehow to consider bodily functions funny" (Lucas, 1979, p. 19). However, Lucas provides no specific examples, nor does he elaborate upon the criticism, apparently satisfied with merely acknowledging the fault. Criticisms of Mowat's sense of humour I think are superfluous. If the lack of critical letters of this nature in the McMaster files is any indication, his established readership has certainly never complained. It would appear that both Lucas and Langer stand apart from the body of Mowat's audience when it comes to evaluations of his sense of humour. As well, both are careful not to draw upon any specific examples while forming such criticisms. The reason for this is quite simple. Mowat's body-function humour *is* extremely funny and it is very difficult to take it out of context, thus rendering dissection an almost impossible task. For example Mowat once told Cheryl McCall of People

Weekly that "[My mother] tried to get me to attend church, but I learned how to make really noisy high-pitched farts that mortified her." This is a typical Mowat response, tongue-in-cheek and off-the-cuff. However, this is the real Farley Mowat, unmasked and without posturing. This is the natural man in Farley Mowat and it is an integral part of his nature. And let us be honest with ourselves, although many of Mowat's witticisms lean toward the earthier side of humour, that humour nevertheless is genuine.

Lucas turns his attention next to Never Cry Wolf. Here too, Lucas affirms that Mowat attempts to dispel myths. In the book Mowat proves that wolves are friendly, not ferocious and are not responsible for the decline of caribou by reason of the fact that they kill only the weak and eat small rodents and other small mammals in the summer. Lucas illustrates his admiration for Never Cry Wolf in the following words.

"Although our literature contains many wolf stories, there are none like Mowat's either in science or in fiction...Mowat is more a 'participant' than other nature writers...he more readily humanizes and authenticates his work as field naturalist and makes it vividly experiential" (Lucas, 1979, pp. 20-21).

Lucas does of course have some criticisms to make about the book, however. He states that although Mowat does not believe the "wolf-boy" stories, he credits as accurate, stories of Eskimo women suckling orphaned husky pups and Eskimo children playing with wolf cubs (p. 21). There is a hint of derisiveness in Lucas' tone which leads the reader to assume that he doesn't credit these stories. Lucas also feels that over all, Never Cry Wolf failed in its aim. The reasons for this are difficult to explain; however, he strikes upon one which seems (in Lucas's eyes) to be the most plausible. That is, Mowat may have tried to combine the humorous and the serious in this book, as he did in The Dog Who Wouldn't Be, in order to popularize his cause. Lucas feels that this weakened its impact. However, he also feels that Never Cry Wolf

"fails as propaganda because it fails as art. It lacks unity of structure and consistency of tone, passing from a long commentary on the Civil Service to the life history of a family of wolves, and from the satiric to low comedy. Mowat's non-fiction betrays him here, too, because the facts, whether true

or not, remain facts; the fiction (the humour) does not derive from them or their arrangement; it is obviously added and hence seems out of place" (Lucas, 1979, p. 23).

Although it is true that Mowat's book had little impact (in terms of affirmative Government action) in North America, it resulted in wolves being placed under state protection in the Soviet Union. As well, it has raised environmental awareness among thousands of individuals world-wide and remains one of Mowat's best sellers to date. The question of failure is, I believe, a moot point.

Finally, in his discussion, Lucas examines A Whale For The Killing. For this book, Lucas has nothing but lavish praise. He calls the book "the finest in Canadian Literature and [Mowat's] best work" (p. 23). In his examination of A Whale For The Killing, Lucas finds positive aspects at every turn. The story itself he says, "is a sad reminder of the story of the Great Auk, the Labrador Duck, the Passenger Pigeon...and of man's greed and stupidity" (p. 24). The style and structure (which came under scrutiny before) are in this book "most effective [and] contribute greatly to the thematic impact of the story" (p. 26).

One can see that throughout his writing, Mowat matured and grew with respect to the way he handled causes. The individual failures of his books, which must be recognized (and have been by Mowat in prefaces to later editions), are only slight when compared to the scope of awareness achieved with each. Ultimately, however, in spite of any amount of criticism plied at them, Mowat's books stand by themselves without support from the author and as such deserve and have achieved a permanent place in Canadian literature and the hearts of Canadians.

## An Historian

Just as Farley Mowat will always be a humorist he will also remain an historian. The books he has written which are not specifically historical in nature, are nonetheless contributions to Canadian history. Books such as The Dog Who Wouldn't Be and the

stories of his experiences in the Keewatin Barren Lands and Burgeo are all specific to Canada and illustrate a series of events in Mowat's personal history and our history as a nation spanning over half a century.

Although these books and others like them are fine examples of Mowat's ability as a writer as well as descriptive documentaries of his life and times, they pale in comparison with those he has written specifically from an historical stand-point. Alec Lucas has been quick to notice this and equally quick to tout Mowat as one of this country's best historical writers.

Lucas first examines The Regiment. Lucas feels that "...it is [Mowat's] most objective book and *is* history...The Regiment becomes all Canadian regiments, and it records the episodes and actions of a significant phase and era of world events in which the Canadian army was involved" (Lucas, 1970, p. 28). The book is characterized by Mowat's well-known narrative and descriptive style but as Lucas points out owes no less of its interest to its subject matter. Both of which are illustrated in the following passage.

"An armour-piercing shell skewered the lead tank from end to end. Flames leapt from the engine. The officer in the turret threw open the hatch and struggled terribly to free himself; and failed, and hung there as the flames rose about him.

Not fifty feet ahead the appalled crew of a carrier saw the flash and were half-deafened by the explosion. But the driver, Cpl. Ernie Madden, spun his carrier on its tracks and with a courage born perhaps of desperation charged the gun headlong. The Germans were caught in the act of re-loading. The carrier crashed into the 88, and the gun crew died where they had stood.

...As the echoing thunder of the first explosion died the Germans opened rapid fire from the whole length of the escarpment upon the column on the plain below. Mortar shells fluted overhead and plumped down in murderous coveys, and 20-mm., four-barreled anti-aircraft cannon lowered their muzzles to sweep the plains with automatic fire. The dreaded 88s barked with excessive savagery, and from two-score well-concealed positions machine guns rippled into life" (The Regiment, 1955, p. 72).

This is the style and type of writing to which Lucas refers. The mind's eye recreates the events almost faster than they can be read. The vividness and clarity of Mowat's style bores deeply into the subconscious of the reader; releasing him/her from the confines of a comfortable armchair and quiet family room it places him/her squarely at Mowat's side simultaneously as silent observer and active participant.

Lucas notes that Mowat does not write in the "blood and guts tradition" of American novelists, and attributes this to the fact that Mowat is describing life in a volunteer army (Lucas, p. 29). Another difference evident in Mowat's writing stems from the fact that he does not discuss 'historical issues' such as the politics of the times nor the villainies of Hitler and Mussolini. Instead, he "reveals the inadequacies of both the army base and the home front, with their red tape and inefficiency" (Lucas, p. 29). Nor is this a surprise coming from the author of People Of The Deer. Mowat has never been afraid to strike at what he sees as the heart of the matter nor to speak his mind, while remaining mindless of the consequences. These same attitudes and actions are what forced his exile from Newfoundland after the Burgeo affair.

Lucas turns his attention next to Coppermine Journey, Ordeal By Ice and Westviking. The first two he dismisses within one paragraph making only a brief mention of Mowat's inability to produce the "scholar" hiding within him. Westviking however, leads to another list of criticisms but in this instance they are tempered with an undercurrent of understanding (if not outright belief) by Lucas.

Westviking is the result of Mowat's compilation of research to support his theory that the Norsemen discovered North America. Within the book Mowat refers to the "Kensington Stone, the Beardsmore relics, the ruins excavated during 1961-63 at L'Anse aux Meadows by Helge Ingstad, and the Vinland Map" (Lucas, p. 30). According to Lucas, with the exception of the ruins, the other evidence is subject to speculation. The bulk of Westviking is made up of Mowat's recounting of the Norse Sagas and from which many of the 'facts' of the book are drawn. As usual Mowat's facts are brought to task by his critic. Lucas does not dispute the facts but rather views Mowat's methods of collection

with a jaundiced eye. For example, "if the sagas differ [Mowat] calls on 'specific linguistic research, the logic of the passage, and his knowledge of the conditioning circumstances' to settle the matter" (Lucas, p. 116). In other instances if Mowat believes a translation to be incorrect he substitutes phrases like "perhaps," "we must assume," or "I interpret this as meaning." However, as we have seen previously, for all of their objections, Mowat's critics frequently find themselves in agreement with some facet of his writing. Lucas remains true to form and admits that "if not quite proof, the book is imaginative and intelligent conjecture at least, and may well suggest areas of further study. The suppositions are eminently reasonable, if not, as Mowat would have it, indisputable" (Lucas, p. 31).

The next in line of Mowat's 'histories' is Canada North which Lucas praises for reading more like a history rather than a coffee-table book like Sibir. Although it is a comprehensive text and shows the reader a very different North than did People Of The Deer, Canada North is typical Mowat, "eulogiz[ing] the natives of the North and derid[ing] the white people of the South..." (Lucas, p. 33). However, it is essentially a survey book approaching coffee-table quality. Full of colour photographs interspersed with Mowat's text, the book presents itself not so much as a visual history of Northern Canada, but rather as a cleverly disguised coffee-table book.

One of Mowat's best 'histories' is contained in This Rock Within The Sea: A Heritage Lost which he wrote "as a text for John de Visser's black and white photographs of the Sou'west coast" of Newfoundland (Lucas, p. 34). The book moves through a general history (encompassing geology, geography, economics and sociology) centres on the outports and ends in Joey Smallwood's modern Newfoundland which has turned it's back on the sea. By dragging Newfoundland into Confederation, Premier Smallwood effectively destroyed the backbone of Newfoundland - the outports. Massive fish packing plants and factory ships took the place of small fleets of men and boys putting to sea in the early morning. Newfoundland's inhabitants were forced to move inland to

either work for the factories or other 'mainland' industries.<sup>3</sup> It is here that Lucas levies some of his heaviest criticism at Mowat.

"This is a grim picture, and it has evoked sharp criticism from Newfoundland critics, who have found it superficial and self-centred. Mowat has written largely as an outsider, and he has paid the price in hostile reviews. Yet his romanticism has undeniably misled him here. Without really knowing outport life before 1949, Newfoundland's year of "gloom," he idealizes it as Wordsworth had idealized his shepherds, but Wordsworth had grown up in the hills and was in truth speaking nostalgically about the world of his boyhood. Mowat had had no such background. Besides he was writing history. His prose is rhetorical and highly emotive, and his realism is misty enough that the book might convince some readers that Mowat writes out of pity and hence creates a tone inappropriate to the characters of the brave men and women he describes" (Lucas, p. 35).

It is interesting to note, however, that Lucas's criticisms are the same as all other critics of Mowat's historical works. Lucas admits this in his conclusion saying that Mowat is frequently dismissed by historians because he does not follow the conventions of the discipline (eg. third person), writing history as a narrative instead. According to Mowat, history is "the deeds of individuals; and these deeds are what, in the long run, comprise the true histories of nations and of peoples" (Westviking, p. 308). In whatever light he is viewed by the "professionals" however, Mowat has reintroduced many Canadians to their own history and has recreated a history that is easy and entertaining to read. It is this facet of the author which makes him even more unique and valuable to Canada, for too often we are turned away from history at an early age because it is poorly written and poorly presented. Often we prefer to study U.S. history over our own; Farley Mowat has successfully refocused the interest of Canadians in their own genesis.

## A Mariner

In his third and shortest chapter (only four pages), Lucas concerns himself with Mowat's 'marine' books. These include, The Grey Seas Under, The Serpent's Coil, The Boat

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<sup>3</sup> See *A Whale For The Killing* for a more detailed discussion.

Who Wouldn't Float, Wake Of The Great Sealers, and This Rock Within The Sea. However, I will examine only the first three in this list because Lucas focuses more attention on these.

Mowat was commissioned by the Foundation Maritime Company to write the first two books in this list. The Foundation Company had no editorial control over what Mowat wrote but as Jack McClelland says, "both of them were Book Of The Month selections and so the Foundation Company made a very good investment" (Interview, 1989).

That investment produced two excellent works of literature. Books which, by and large, are ignored by most of Mowat's critics who are more interested in attacking his environmental stands. Lucas however, stands apart from this body and gives these two sagas the attention they deserve.

The Grey Seas Under is a documentary of the salvage ship Foundation Franklin and her operations during the years 1930-1947. Lucas praises Mowat for his use of suspense and descriptive detail which, he "varies with a touch of humour" (Lucas, p. 40). Lucas does feel that in some cases Mowat uses too much detail in his narrative, detail which is marine oriented and thus unintelligible to anyone without a background knowledge of ships. Lucas also feels that because of the lack of conversation the characters are flat, but he notes that the surplus of action somewhat compensates for this.

The Serpent's Coil (Mowat's second effort for the Foundation Company) centred on one single event in which the Foundation Josephine salvages a former Liberty ship the Leicester. Lucas lavishes praise on Mowat's narrative abilities used in this book which he says "ranks with the best descriptive writing in our literature...[proving] once again that [Mowat's] forte is essentially descriptive and narrative prose" (Lucas, p. 42). Although Mowat creates more conversation between the characters of this story, Lucas feels that they are still shallow and resemble character actors rather than actual people.

However, the criticism here is light and has very few teeth. In fact, throughout this whole chapter Lucas has very little negative criticism to levy at the author.

The Boat Who Wouldn't Float occasioned the greatest attention from Lucas (and other critics). The book relates the adventures Farley Mowat and publisher/friend Jack McClelland shared during a summer aboard the Happy Adventure in Newfoundland. Both Mowat and McClelland each tout this as their personal favourite Mowat book. Lucas calls it a "simple" story, and it is, as Mowat himself explains.

"The Boat Who Wouldn't Float was written for fun. I had decided that I had done enough hard work, I had fought enough causes, crusaded enough and deserved a little amusement" (Interview, 1989).

Jack McClelland likes the book for entirely different reasons; one of which being the fact that he is in it, but aside from that,

"...having lived through two thirds of the book with Farley, I can read it and see a master craftsman at work. I guess I learned more about the technique and art of writing from that book than from anything else I've ever read" (Interview, 1989).

Lucas as well, has nothing but praise for Mowat's prose and style but in this instance focuses closely on Mowat's humour. He credits Mowat with playing the fool in his own book and becoming the butt of his own jokes, a role which he had previously avoided. Specifically, Lucas cites those incidents in which Mowat acts the role of the ignorant outsider to illustrate this. It is undoubtedly true that The Boat Who Wouldn't Float is one of the best examples (perhaps *the* best) of Mowat's ability to write humour. In the book, their boat sails out of the harbour backwards, leaks incessantly, and has an engine and compass with a seemingly demonic will of their own. His observations of the people and places around him are no less fraught with hilarity. The events surrounding the acquiring of a new mainmast (which had been cut on the side of a hill), for the perpetually dry-docked boat present a fine example:

"The weight proved a little too much for Enos - it weighed a good three hundred pounds - so Obie shifted to the middle of it, taking the entire strain on his own shoulder, and began to trot down the slope. Obie is a big man and very powerfully built, but that mast diminished him until he looked like a small child carrying the biggest caber any Scotsman ever hefted.

Jack and I stood stunned and watched him go. He gained momentum with every plunging step. Enos ran along beside him, a sprightly terrier barking encouragement.

They reached the narrow stretch of level ground at the landwash and Obie's speed did not diminish. Enos stopped encouraging him and began to yell in a rising inflection: 'Fer Jasus's sake, me son, *slow down!*'

It was no good. Gravity and momentum and various other physical laws which I don't understand had taken full control. Obie went thundering out along the stage, which shook and quivered like a spider's web - and he went right off the end.

He and the mast made a fantastic splash and the sound brought the girls and men at the fish plant running to the wharf to see what had happened. They saw Obie astride the mast, laughing like a gawk - a Newfoundland bird - and paddling toward shore with his big, splayed hands" (Mowat, 1969 p. 48).

As mentioned earlier, Mowat won the Stephen Leacock Award for Humour for this work and it has certainly withstood the test of time - and critics.

The most salient and common feature to be found within these books is Mowat's love for the sea and (generally) the men and women who live with it and from it. Lucas points this out but it is almost a needless observation. Perhaps, more important than Mowat's admiration and love for the men and women of the seas is his deeper love and admiration for the animals which populate these same waters. For reasons which are not explained, Lucas does not include this aspect of Mowat's work within this small chapter. Nor does he effectively incorporate it elsewhere in the text. For illustration, one title in particular comes to mind - A Whale For The Killing, although already discussed in the first chapter, it also overlaps into this area, in the same way many of

Mowat's themes and stories blend among themselves and overlap more than a single subject.

The following quotation from A Whale For The Killing illustrates well, I believe, Mowat's feelings for the sea and the creatures which inhabit it.

"I sat for a long time on the crest of the head walking the confines of my mind, savouring the bitter taste of my defeat and slowly I became conscious of the eternal sounding of the seas, and my thoughts drifted away from myself and the world of men, turning outward to the void of ocean and the world of whales. For the first time since the trapped whale vanished, I became aware of a rending sense of loss.

It was dark and there was none to know that I was weeping. Weeping not just for the whale that died but because the fragile link between her race and mine was severed. I wept because I knew that this fleeting opportunity to bridge, no matter how tenuously, the ever-widening chasm that is isolating mankind from the totality of life had perished in a welter of human stupidity and ignorance, some part of which was mine. I wept not for the loneliness which would now be Claire's and mine as aliens among the people we had grown to love but for the inexpressibly greater loneliness which man, having made himself the ultimate stranger on his own planet had doomed himself to carry into the silence of his final hour" (A Whale For The Killing, 1972. pp. 223-4).

## Creative Writer

Lucas' final chapter would perhaps be more aptly titled "Children's Writer", for it is in this chapter that Lucas examines Mowat's children's books. As well, Chapter Four becomes more of an overview with a running-commentary by Lucas than it does a real criticism.

Lucas discusses such things as the way in which books like The Dog Who Wouldn't Be have been adopted by children (although written for adults) and vice versa in the case of Owls In The Family. Lucas credits Mowat's prose with having a "freshness about them" that other authors seem to lack and asserts that his stories of the north (and others) are more realistic by far than those of Ballantyne, E.R. Young or J.M. Oxley.

The reason for this, according to Lucas, is the fact that Mowat has been to the north and has sailed the eastern seaboard and thus, simply relives the experiences.

Lucas points out again that Mowat's story telling abilities and use of humour are exceptional and that he is more interested in the "physical world and a life of action," which Lucas asserts, "unquestionably attracts young readers" (Lucas, p. 50). He also examines the way in which Mowat draws his characters, noting that Mowat's Indians are real people not "redskin varmints" or noble savages "waiting for the word of the Lord" (Lucas, p. 51). It is here in this chapter that Lucas becomes particularly gracious, placing Mowat in the company of such well-known fiction authors as Daniel Defoe, Marshall Saunders and Morley Callaghan. It is also here that Lucas makes the fewest criticisms of Mowat's work, stopping only once to agree with Mowat's contention that Curse Of The Viking's Grave was "a lousy book" (Lucas, p. 53).

As might be expected, Lucas spends much of his efforts discussing and quoting the various merits of The Dog Who Wouldn't Be at great length; Owls In The Family receives similar attention. However, after all of his discussions, examinations and criticisms, Lucas makes no summary of Mowat's work as a whole. Each section was examined and dissected as planned and then left to stand alone. As such, I think that, Farley Mowat, although a very good review and the most comprehensive, offering a number of very good criticisms of Mowat's works, falls short of the mark, leaving one with the impression that the job is not quite complete. A final short chapter discussing Mowat's stature or position as a writer in the world at large or even within Canada alone would have provided a more fitting conclusion and a well-rounded finish to Lucas' work.

## CHAPTER 5

### ***Review Of The Literature***

This final chapter will examine Farley Mowat in the context of his roles as an Environmentalist and a Social Critic.

#### **Mowat's Role As An Environmentalist**

The term environmentalist encompasses many elements in addition to the definition given in Chapter 1. It refers to an individual agitator who is an active participant in environmental concerns and conservation. Environmentalists also want to rectify situations in which they are involved. Environmentalists are caring; they are empathetic and they are sincere in their desire to come to the aid of animals. It is also important that environmentalists be knowledgeable about their subjects. They must have a familiarity gained by experience (Compact Edition of The Oxford English Dictionary, 1971. p. 1550). Many environmentalists also have technical knowledge and training in fields such as zoology, biology, chemistry and others. It is also very important for environmentalists to use their knowledge with understanding. They must have sufficient intelligence to enable them to be capable of judging with knowledge (Compact Edition of The Oxford English Dictionary, 1971. p. 3493).

Environmentalists are frequently whistle-blowers. In other words, they point a finger at and call public attention to individuals or organizations that damage the environment. This trait stems from the desire to preserve habitats and wildlife that all environmentalists share. Environmentalists often place themselves in physical danger in their efforts to preserve and protect wildlife. By putting their bodies on the firing line, they commit the ultimate act of dedication by standing in the way of mainstream society or environmentally exploitative groups. Environmentalists do not simply write letters to their Members of Parliament - they take action. Truly concerned and dedicated

environmentalists also focus their efforts on global concerns and not only provincial or local issues.

Farley Mowat is an environmentalist who encompasses each of these elements. His writing illustrates each of these points in turn and places him squarely at the forefront of the environmental movement in this country. Through an examination of a number of his works I will show that Mowat has these environmental qualities.

Never Cry Wolf, Mowat's twelfth and probably best-known book, provides a good example of his environmentalist stand and his conservationist leanings. It was likely this book, more than any other, which firmly launched Mowat's career as a writer and first exposed Canadians to the passionate animal-lover in their midst. A large part of Mowat's ability to deliver his environmental message and enable the reader to empathize with him is derived from his descriptive narratives. It is difficult to expose a reader to Mowat's views and attitudes without exposing the reader to Mowat's richly descriptive and empathic writing style. Clearly, Mowat's genius lies not in what he says but in how he says it. For example, when he describes the encounter with his first wolf, Mowat's writing is not only knowledgeable but also discloses powerful emotions just below the surface.

"I allowed my thoughts to return to the events of the evening. Considering how brief the encounter with the wolf had been, I was amazed to discover the wealth of detail I could recall. In my mind's eye I could visualize the wolf as if I had known him (or her) for years. The image of that massive head with its broad white ruff, short pricked ears, tawny eyes and grizzled muzzle was indelibly fixed in memory. So too was the image of the wolf in flight; the lean and sinewy motion and the over-all impression of a beast the size of a small pony; an impression implicit with a feeling of lethal strength" (Never Cry Wolf, 1963. p. 42).

When describing animals, Mowat's narrations display his familiarity with his subjects; they are sharply focused and immediately convey to the reader the depth of caring Mowat has for his subjects. In descriptions such as the one above, the reader can detect strong feelings at work just behind the adjectives. Mowat's love of animals and

his hatred of what humankind is doing to them and our planet enable him to write about and empathize with animals in this way. These empathic appeals are the driving force behind Farley Mowat and his descriptive passages are the medium through which they are expressed.

To say that Mowat loves animals is not quite correct. It is more accurate to state that he understands and as a result, admires them. In the following passage, Mowat explains why animals are more attractive to him than human beings. He is certainly correct in stating that animals are always what they appear to be. Animals are easily trusted and can be relied upon to behave in specific ways in many situations. Human beings are always unknown variables. This makes us dangerous to ourselves and paranoid of each other individually and in groups.

Mowat finds a constant force in animals, a known variable in an ever-changing world and he is more comfortable with them than with humans. The very fact that Mowat believes this demonstrates the depth of his understanding and knowledge. During my interview with the author he explained why he feels this way towards animals.

"The animal world, the animate world is conditional. You have to meet certain conditions to achieve acceptance there. I learned how to do that,...I'm not a misanthrope, I like people as much as I like any of the other animals *but* individually and selectively. With the other animals I tend to like them generically, I tend to trust them generically to be what they appear to be. With human beings one never knows" (Interview, 1989).

His years as a biologist working with animals first hand, as well as the accumulation of his many other skills have enabled Mowat to acquire a broad base of knowledge and a deep understanding of the world we share. During my interview with Jack McClelland, he explained why Mowat is so knowledgeable about the animate world.

"I would say as an environmentalist he is on much safer ground. I mean that is an area of expertise. He has studied the subject area widely and is

extremely well informed, even exceptionally well informed, and he keeps up to date with what is going on in the world" (Interview, 1989).

Mowat's wide base of knowledge has enabled him in many cases to escape serious criticism, because no matter how controversial his opinions might be - he knows what he's talking about.

The power of Mowat's writing is his intellectual, yet empathic understanding of our interactions with our planet and its inhabitants. Through passages such as the excerpt from Never Cry Wolf, we see our world through both the scientist's critical eye and the environmentalist's empathic one, resulting in a clinical yet emotional view. Ken Adachi has noted that, of Canadian authors, "Mowat [is] among the most spontaneous. It's a talent that enables him to see connections where the rest of us would not have..." (Adachi, 1984. p. G12).

For example, observe both the language used and the feelings emoted in Mowat's descriptions of George and Angeline, the wolves he studied. This excerpt illustrates very well the sincerity of Mowat's caring and the connection he makes between the similarity between animals and humans,

"George had presence. His dignity was unassailable, yet he was by no means aloof. Conscientious to a fault, thoughtful of others, and affectionate within reasonable bounds, he was the kind of father whose idealized image appears in many wistful books of human family reminiscences, but whose real prototype has seldom paced the earth upon two legs. George was, in brief, the kind of father every son longs to acknowledge as his own.

His wife was equally memorable.

[S]lim... with...wide-spaced, slightly slanted eyes, she seemed the picture of a minx. Beautiful, ebullient, passionate to a degree, and devilish when the mood was on her, she hardly looked like the epitome of motherhood; yet there could have been no better mother anywhere. I found myself calling her Angeline...I respected and liked George very much, but I became deeply fond of Angeline, and still live in hopes that I can

somewhere find a human female who embodies all her virtues" (Never Cry Wolf, 1963. pp. 66-7).

Mowat's sincere admiration of George and Angeline is revealed very clearly in this passage. Through Mowat's writing, the reader can immediately see and understand the way in which Mowat is affected by the animals he comes into contact with. Only an individual who cared deeply about life and the womb of life (the environment) could write about it in the way Farley Mowat does. Matthew Arnold once wrote of William Wordsworth, "Nature herself seems, I say, to take the pen out of his hand, and to write for him with her own bare, sheer, penetrating power" (Mitchell, 1985. p. 19). I believe that the same can be said of Farley Mowat.

Few environmentalists are as dedicated as Farley Mowat. Not only is the volume of factual material contained in his books testimony to this fact but also the degree to which he exposes himself to unusual and potentially dangerous situations in the pursuit of enlightenment.

While Mowat was conducting his study of wolves, he was unable to discover what they were eating during the summer months when the caribou were scarce. Much to his amazement he learned that the wolves were existing solely on a diet of mice. This was a revolutionary notion and one which would have to be substantiated by hard facts before the scientific community would accept its validity. However, Mowat was faced with a problem,

"I knew that the mouse-wolf relationship was a revolutionary one to science and would be treated with suspicion, and possibly with ridicule, unless it could be so thoroughly substantiated that there could be no room to doubt its validity. I had already established two major points:

1. That wolves caught and ate mice.
2. That the small rodents were sufficiently numerous to support the wolf population.

There remained, however, a third point vital to the proof of my contention. This concerned the nutritional value of mice. It was imperative for me to

prove that a diet of small rodents would suffice to maintain a large carnivore in good condition" (Never Cry Wolf, 1963. p. 8).

Thus, as there were no dogs or other large animals to use as experimental or control subjects, Mowat used himself. For the next several weeks Mowat subsisted on a diet of mice and even went so far as to devise several recipes for their preparation; one of these "Souris A La Creme" (Mouse With Cream) has been included in The Canlit Foodbook (Clarkson, 1988. p. 18). Few other individuals would have the ingenuity and dedication (not to mention the stomach) to put themselves through such an experiment. Farley Mowat has this dedication and it is a quality which is highly visible in what he writes. Commitment and dedication such as these are not the qualities of ordinary men and women. They are to be found only in those individuals who have an overwhelming curiosity and drive to learn about their planet and its inhabitants. These individuals are *true* environmentalists and Farley Mowat is among them.

Mowat's understanding and concern with regard to animals has been disclosed in the numerous magazine articles he has published and been quoted in over the last 30 years. Articles by journalists such as Ken Adachi, Dick Brown, Ian Darragh, Timothy Findley, Doreen Martens and Elinor Langor have all proven Mowat is very concerned with the future of other species as well as ours. These articles have illustrated how well Mowat understands the fragile links between human and non-human co-habitation on a global level. Mowat himself has demonstrated his concern for animals and his understanding of our responsibilities towards them in articles such as Politics Kill Seals Don't They? (1982). Mowat's proliferation within the print media of North America has made him a widely known and read author. As a result his works have a wider impact than they might otherwise have.

During the late 1960's, Mowat attempted to exercise his responsibilities towards the environment. He tried to save the life of an 80-ton Fin whale which became trapped in a salt-water pond near his home in Burgeo Newfoundland. Mowat rushed to the scene and upon his arrival discovered that the local youths had been shooting the whale for target practice. He flew into a rage.

"[These teenagers] chose to torment to death this captive whale. And it enraged me beyond any powers to describe...I wasn't enraged at the Newfoundlanders, and I wasn't enraged at the people I had come to love and to know...I was enraged at these [youths] who were of *my* culture who represented all that would be contaminated with a disease which represents all that is evil to me. ...And there they were, spewing their bloody poison, literally, into the body of this gigantic animal. And I saw red, I just went insane." (In Search Of Farley Mowat. 1981).

Mowat then took the story to the media in an attempt to save the animal's life. During the media attention that followed, Mowat floated about the pond in an open boat observing the whale and taking notes. By doing this he exposed himself to potentially more serious harm than he had by simply consuming mice. The whale was dying and in horrible pain from the bullet wounds which had become septic. It could easily have attacked Mowat or overturned his boat in the frightened and disoriented state it was in. Nevertheless, Mowat stayed close by, sharing in the pain and torment of the captive animal. Despite Mowat's efforts Moby Joe (later discovered to have been female and pregnant) died. She had lived only 10 days from the date of the shooting.

Mowat understood the consequences of not only the actions of the youths but also his own. In a single passage written after the event he encompassed a unique understanding, sincere caring, and also pointed out the guilty parties while addressing a global issue.<sup>4</sup> Mowat was so deeply scared by the experience that he lapsed into a seven year silence, during which he did no serious writing until 1979, the year of And No Birds Sang. This silence was not just an excuse for Mowat to escape public attention and lick his wounds. He was deeply affected by the death of the whale and his own failure to save it. Another man might not have been as affected, but Mowat was an active Environmentalist and the whale's death traumatized him deeply. However, the book which resulted generated awareness and addressed additional concerns.

A Whale For The Killing also focused upon global issues. In the book Mowat divulged the details of his research on the International Whaling Commission. Mowat feels that

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<sup>4</sup> See Chapter 4 p. 57, from A Whale For The Killing pp. 223-4.

the I.W.C. has been set up by countries involved in commercial whaling for the sole purpose of enabling them to engage in wholesale exploitation of cetaceans. The proof for this belief is clearly supported in historical statistics. According to Mowat, the eight species of Great Whales were believed to number about four and a half million individuals during the 17th century. By 1930 there were less than one and a half million survivors of these groups. Less than fifty years later (1972 statistics) no more than three hundred and fifty thousand are estimated to exist. In his last chapter, Mowat fired this bolt at the I.W.C.

"The official figures issued by the I.W.C. are bad enough - but they do not, by any means, tell the whole story. Most members of the I.W.C. (and several whaling countries are not even members) routinely fail to report the "accidental" killing of undersized whales, cows with calves, and whales of "protected" species, as well as direct quota violations. Since the I.W.C. does not provide either effective surveillance, or meaningful sanctions against offenders, the quotas which it sets have always been, and continue to be, as much honoured in the breach as in the observance. To make matters worse there is an increasingly large number of catcher vessels...whaling on the high seas with a total disregard for *any* regulations or conventions. [T]hey are believed to kill between two and five thousand Great Whales every year, *none of which* appear in the "official" statistics of the I.W.C." (A Whale For The Killing, 1972. p. 235).

Bringing public attention to a particular situation or environmental problem cum disaster is a trait common to many environmentalists. Sea of Slaughter is by far, Mowat's strongest environmental statement, and one in which he condemns *all* his fellow humans. In his preface, Mowat delivers a scathing denunciation of our behavior and simultaneously makes a plea for our return to sanity and humanity.

"It is true that this book describes a bloody piece of our past - it records what we have accomplished in one special region [the Eastern seaboard] during 500 years of tenure as the most lethal animal ever to have appeared upon this wasting planet. But perhaps, with luck, this record of our outrageous behaviour in and around the Sea of Slaughter will help us comprehend the consequences of unbridled greed unleashed against animate creation. Perhaps it will help to change our attitudes and modify our future activities so that we do not become the ultimate destroyers of the living world...of which we are a part" (Sea of Slaughter, 1984. p. 14).

Within the pages of this book, Mowat describes the near-total destruction and in some cases extinction, of such animals as: the Great Auk, the Eskimo Curlew, Swiftwings (of a population of millions, it is now estimated that only 20 individuals survive), the North American Buffalo, King Cod and many species of whale, to name a few. Sea of Slaughter is highly reminiscent of Rachel Carson's Silent Spring which denounced the use of DDT in the late 1950's and early 1960's and the effect it had upon the natural food chain up to and including humans. In the same way that Carson targeted farmers and government agencies, Mowat continually impeaches hunters and government-sanctioned over-hunting, fishing or trapping as the cause of the dramatic decline in animal populations.

In two recent articles Mowat clearly stated his opinion of hunters and the governmental bodies that support them. In Outdoor Canada, Mowat stated that,

"Stats Canada says that the figures on hunters are just barely 10 percent in most provinces, and it's decreasing. These sons of --- make all the noise. They do so because they're well organized, because all of the fish and game departments in the provinces depend on them to keep their empires going. They work for each other. It's a pressure group of a minority telling us what we should do with our wildlife. ...The point is that they want to keep other forms of wildlife available for them to kill. It's as simple as that. It's such an open and such case, I don't know why people beat around the bush about it" (Brown, 1987. p. 22).

And in the Toronto Star that same year, Mowat singled out the federal government as the culprit.

"The federal government in conjunction with the Nova Scotia government [is] waging a war of virtual extermination on the gray seals, the very large seals that live year round on coast. They've been blamed for infecting the cod with worms, for damaging fishing gear, but they are the scapegoats for the rapid reduction of fish stock in the North Atlantic. It's due to over-fishing by man, but we always need a scapegoat" (Scrivener, 1987. p. D2).

As a concerned Environmentalist Mowat has never been afraid of bringing to public notice those individuals whom he deems deserving of his criticism. This issue was addressed by Mowat even more strongly in an earlier article called Politics Kill Seals Don't They? (1982) in which he once again blasted the Federal government for their attack on the Canadian seal population.

Mowat has certainly made his stand against wholesale slaughter very clear, but he despairs of his message being heard by people in time to avert disaster. In the following passage, Mowat's distress is genuine and easily recognized, once again providing evidence of the quality of his caring and empathic attitudes.

"I don't think anything is going to change the direction we're taking. I think we're heading for the abyss and nothing short of turning time back a couple of million years would alter that" (Interview, 1989).

Perhaps we are not too late to make some changes, however, Mowat's most recent book provides little encouragement.

In the intervening years between Sea of Slaughter and 1987, Mowat's stand has not changed. During that time Mowat researched and wrote Virunga: The Passion of Dian Fossey the life story of an American woman who spent most of her life in the Virunga Mountains of Rwanda Africa studying the endangered mountain gorillas.

In this book, Mowat was able to demonstrate the uncommon depth of his understanding while at the same time address a global concern. In Virunga, he showed another Environmentalist putting herself in physical danger in support of their cause. Virunga is an unusual book for Mowat to have written because it does not conform to his usual semi-autobiographical writing style. For the first time, Mowat wrote about another human being instead of an animal as the story's focus, and in doing so, allowed Dian Fossey to dominate the limelight instead of himself. Therefore, from a critical stand point, Virunga is one of Mowat's most interesting books.

Virunga was written only two years after Fossey's death and Mowat has produced in that book, what many people consider to be his most empathic work. It is interesting to note however, that Mowat and his publisher Jack McClelland had very different views about Virunga. "I was suckered into that one," Mowat says. He goes on to explain his feelings by saying,

"I'm not a biographer, I'm an *autobiographer*... [Virunga is] a book I would have been happy not to write. I just don't feel comfortable writing about someone else, I know perfectly well I'm never going to understand them. If I hadn't lucked onto or I guess in desperation, figured out the procedure of the two voices and subjugated my voice to hers [Fossey's] I don't think I ever would have finished it" (Interview, 1989).

Jack McClelland however, disagrees with Mowat categorically.

"Its subject matter was one that, in principle, was very close to Farley's heart, in that Dian Fossey in her own way, was a Mowat-like person who devoted her life to saving...animals. ... I think a marvelous book resulted...I didn't know that Farley was so diffident about it...but it had no Canadian connection effectively and that may have been part of the consideration for him because most of his books have been directly Canadian-oriented" (Interview, 1989).

McClelland's point that Fossey was a "Mowat-like person" is very important because in this case Mowat, an Environmentalist himself, was writing about another Environmentalist, Dian Fossey. Virunga is therefore, a very unique book and one in which it is possible to examine the characteristics which Environmentalists share. In Virunga, Mowat demonstrates his understanding of the animate world through Fossey's journal entries, discusses how Fossey put herself in danger in the same way he did in Burgeo and he addresses global concerns.

Mowat shared a form of kinship with Dian Fossey. They both were motivated by the same drives and desires to preserve the wildlife of our planet. Fossey choose to concentrate on one species, whereas Mowat (while he has placed emphasis on wolves), has been much more generic in his efforts. Nevertheless, because of their

similarities it was easy for Mowat to understand Fossey's attitudes and reactions towards animals because they both shared familiarity through experience. Examine Fossey's description of her first encounter with a gorilla compared with Mowat's first encounter with a wolf. Each author's sense of being *connected to nature* is vitally apparent in their writing.

""Kweli nudugu yanga!" These words in Swahili, whispered by the awestruck Manual, who was also seeing his first gorilla, summed up exactly what I was feeling. 'Surely, God, these are my kin.' (Virunga, 1987. p. 16).

Mowat demonstrates his clear understanding of nature and animate creation through the passages he choose to include from Fossey's journals. In each case in which one of Fossey's journal entries occurs, it reflects Farley Mowat's strong grasp of how Fossey felt about her gorillas and also expresses Mowat's own attitudes towards the environment. Because Mowat was not telling his own story or even a story in which he had a nominal part, he was forced to express his own sentiments through the voice of Dian Fossey and through the words of her journals. In doing so, Mowat has been able to express his own feelings in a unique way, but one which does not diminish the empathic impact upon the reader. One feels when reading the book, that Fossey's words and Mowat's are almost one and the same. Although Fossey wrote without Mowat's descriptive flair, her words convey her emotions to the reader just as well as Mowat's. The ability to communicate their ideas to others is a trait which many Environmentalists share.

In Virunga, Mowat describes incidents in which Fossey chased off poachers, tourists and anyone else who threatened the safe habitation of her gorilla study groups. When reading these passages, one cannot help but be reminded of the way in which Mowat rushed to the defence of Moby Joe in Newfoundland. The parallels between the behavior of Fossey and Mowat are blatantly obvious. Fossey experienced an event in Rwanda that was similar to Mowat's experience in Burgeo. A gorilla Fossey had studied for 10 years and one which had been the first wild gorilla to voluntarily approach and

touch a human being, was killed by poachers. African natives, working for black market agents, killed Digit and removed his head and hands for sale as ashtrays and other tourist items.

Mowat's reactions towards the shooting of the whale in Burgeo have been discussed in detail. Consequently, Fossey's reactions to the death of Digit smack of familiarity.

"There are times when one cannot accept facts for fear of shattering one's being. As I listened to Ian's terrible words, all of Digit's life since my first meeting with him as a playful ball of black fluff ten years earlier, poured through my mind. From that dreadful moment on, I came to live within an insulated part of myself" (Virunga, 1987. p. 183).

Digit's death had a profound effect on Fossey, in the same way Moby Joe's death affected Mowat. "Not even her own botched abortion, had ...dealt her so savage a blow or imposed worse mental anguish. And no other conceivable disaster could have fired her to such a pitch of passion as did this bloody butchery" (Virunga, 1987, p. 184). Just as Mowat turned to the media, Fossey leaped into action, writing letters to wildlife organizations and magazines, printing posters and contacting government agencies in Africa and abroad in an attempt to raise awareness about the gorillas and funds for their protection. Government graft on the part of the Africans and a myriad of other obstacles drove Fossey to despair.

"Digit has died in vain!

She scrawled the bitter phrase in heavy letters across a page of her diary, and there are stains on the page that may have been left by tears of anger and frustration" (Virunga, 1987. p. 200).

Fossey's reaction to Digit's death was remarkably similar to Mowat's after the death of Moby Joe. Mowat too "sat at the crest of the head...weeping...for the whale that died..." (A Whale For The Killing, 1972. p. 223). Both Mowat and Fossey felt the loss of an animal 'friend' so strongly that they were driven to great lengths to not only make others aware by calling it to the attention of the public but also to the extent that they put their bodies on the firing line. They both partially failed in their attempts, their words and the

words of others about them survive memory longer than their actions. Mowat stood up to the men who shot the whale and lost, afterwards being forced to leave Newfoundland. Fossey stood up to poachers and government corruption and lost, having paid with her life.

On December 27, 1985, Dian Fossey was murdered in her cabin at camp Karisoke by an unknown assailant. The assumption remains however, that Dian was becoming an obstacle to the Rwandan government which wanted to exploit the gorillas and as a result she was forcibly removed by an assassin.

Virunga was an important book for Mowat. By writing it he was forced to experiment with an alternate writing style and could not hide from his audience or critics behind his familiar style of subjective non-fiction. It is also important in another way. Just as And No Birds Sang was Mowat's definitive and strongest statement against war, I believe Virunga, is his strongest appeal for individual awareness, and action in the conservation of wildlife. It is perhaps his most outward looking book, being both specific and global in scope. Within the pages of Virunga, Mowat discusses international institutions such as the Digit Fund, the World Wildlife Fund, the World Conservation Centre, World Wildlife International and the National Geographic Society. By doing so, Mowat addressed the environmental concerns of not just Africa but of the entire planet, for these are organizations which act on behalf of all wildlife species. The very fact that Mowat wrote Virunga at all shows he is a globally concerned Environmentalist. He could have easily turned down McClelland's suggestion to write the book and turned his attention back to Canadian subjects. However, he did not.

Farley Mowat has shown himself to be a global Environmentalist through several of his books, however, Virunga illustrates this characteristic best. As well, Mowat has demonstrated his unique understanding of the intricacies of the animate world in each of his books dealing with animals or human beings' interaction with animals. Certainly Never Cry Wolf and Sea of Slaughter demonstrate well his deep concern and caring

and best display his intensive knowledge of animal behaviour and of background research and material.

There can be no doubt that Farley Mowat is an active participant in the events about which he writes. Never Cry Wolf, A Whale For The Killing and Sea of Slaughter are at least three books in which Mowat has been directly involved physically either by participating in the events of the book or through intensive research. In Mowat's case, research for some books (such as Sea of Slaughter) can take as long as five years.

Farley Mowat's books also deal effectively with preservation of the environment and bringing to account individuals or organizations which exploit it. However, there is no one book in which these themes are brought forth more clearly than in any other. It is an accepted fact by critics that Mowat is an author who can be depended upon to stand up for the rights of animals to co-exist with us. He can also be depended upon to apply as much pressure and publicity as is required to curb the behaviour of or at least embarrass, individuals and organizations which deny animals this right.

Mowat is also an author of great sincerity. His empathic position towards his non-human fellows has been demonstrated on many occasions. He has been known to place himself in physical danger on behalf of a particular animal or animals and it has been established that this is a characteristic common only to the most devoted of Environmentalists, as illustrated by Dian Fossey. Mowat's devotion to his causes is best illustrated within the pages of A Whale For The Killing and Virunga as well as many periodical articles.

As is the case with many Environmentalists, Farley Mowat addresses global concerns within the texts of his books. He has been in attendance at environmental meetings addressing topics such as acid rain and pollution. Individuals attending these meetings with Mowat have included Dr. David Suzuki, Pierre Burton, Peter C. Newman, Margaret Atwood and June Callwood, among others. In books such as A Whale For The Killing, Virunga and Sea of Slaughter, Mowat has established his place among

Environmentalists the world over who are concerned about the entire planet and not just their own localities.

Over the past three decades Farley Mowat has established himself as an expert on the Northern regions of the globe, taking his interest and research beyond the boundaries of Canada, and exploring the Norsemen (Weskiking), the Soviet Union (Sibir) and the Ihalmiut (People Of The Deer). As well, Mowat has become internationally recognized as an active Environmentalist, involved in the preservation of all wildlife species, drawing no distinction between seals and wolves or king cod and gorillas. In many ways Mowat's books have established him as an authority on the environment and have placed him at the forefront of the environmental movement in Canada.

Just as Farley Mowat has embraced the world of animals, he has turned his back on the world of human beings. Mowat has said on numerous occasions that the human race is doomed to self destruction. Over the years he has leaned further away from civilization and more towards the world of animals from whence he watches the rest of humanity with a jaundiced eye. The following final passage from Sea of Slaughter illustrates best and perhaps most succinctly all the component parts which have been discussed and which when combined create that individual we call the Environmentalist.

"I sit at the window of my home beside the Atlantic Ocean. My work is almost done. Having led me through so many dark and bloody chronicles, this book comes to an end. The question with which it began is answered. The living world is dying in our time.

I look out over the unquiet waters of the bay, south to the convergence of the sea and sky beyond which the North Atlantic heaves against the eastern seaboard of the continent. And in my mind's eye, I see it as it was.

Pod after spouting pod of whales, the great ones together with the lesser kinds, surge through the waters everywhere a-ripple with living tides of fishes. Wheeling multitudes of gannets, kittiwakes, and other such becloud the sky. The stony finger marking the end of the long beach below me is clustered with resting seals. The beach itself flickers with a restless drift of shorebirds. In the bight of the bay, whose bottom is a

metropolis of clams, mussels, and lobsters, a concourse of massive heads emerges amongst floating islands of eider ducks. Scimitar tusks gleam like a lambent flame.....the vision fails.

And I behold the world as it is now.

In all that vast expanse of sky and sea and fringing land, one gull soars in lonely flight - one drifting mote of life upon an enormous, almost empty stage.

When our forebears commenced their exploitation of this continent they believed the animate resources of the New World were infinite and inexhaustible. The vulnerability of that living fabric - the intricacy and fragility of its all-too-finite parts - was beyond their comprehension. It can at least be said in their defence that they were mostly ignorant of the inevitable consequences of their dreadful depredations.

We who are alive today can claim no such exculpation for our biocidal actions and their dire consequences. Modern man has increasing opportunity to be aware of the complexity and inter-relationship of the living world. If ignorance is to serve now as an excuse then it can only be willful, murderous ignorance" (Sea of Slaughter, 1984. p. 404).

If Farley Mowat is not, after all, an Environmentalist then I can only suggest that he be called prophet instead.

Mowat's abilities as a writer in the defence of animals have established him as a driving force in literature. When these same abilities are turned in anger upon his fellows, condemning human stupidity and short-sightedness the author's impact is no less acute.

## Mowat's Role As A Social Critic

In addition to being an author of environmental non-fiction, Farley Mowat has also established himself as an insightful social critic. In this portion of the literature review I will examine Farley Mowat in his role as a social critic.

Most people agree that a social critic is an individual who justifiably criticizes their society because of what he or she sees as the wrongs or injustices or the unethical or inappropriate behaviours of any part of that society. Farley Mowat goes further than this by insisting that he is an *anti-social* critic, that is, a critic of anti-social behaviour. Funk & Wagnalls Standard College Dictionary defines anti-social behavior as activities "opposed to or disruptive of society or the general good" (1963. p. 65). Farley Mowat sees himself in the context of this role, as one who criticizes the anti-social behaviour which human beings exercise upon each other and upon animate creation.

A social critic is also a combination of many elements. A social critic does not simply criticize society but also critically monitors government, attitudes, policies, injustices and unethical behaviour as well. Social critics frequently attack society's ignorance or lack of forethought and by their nature, social critics typically generate controversy. In fact, some social critics work very hard at being at the centre of such controversy.

Farley Mowat takes delight in saying and doing controversial things and is not afraid of creating controversy. He also takes delight in poking fun at and doing battle with individuals or organizations that in his opinion, are silly or foolish. Farley Mowat has dealt with each of these at one time or another within books or articles he has written and the issue has been dealt with by other authors writing about Mowat. I will show that he has written social criticism in each area listed above.

Mowat established himself as a social critic with the publication of his first book People of The Deer. In this book he criticized the Federal government, its lack of forethought and unethical behaviour in dealing with the native people of Canada's north. In the

beginning of the book Mowat retraces the history of the Ihalmiut's relationship with the white man. Part of this tale was retold to Mowat by a trader named Franz.

In the 1930's fur prices were at a premium and white trappers descended upon the north en masse. Eventually the Europeans came into contact with the Barrenland Eskimos and as is common to our race, exploited them as cheap labour.

"[T]raders...had shown the People that pursuit of fox pelts was more desirable than pursuit of meat. And so, in a few decades, the People had learned to neglect the caches of good meat, which they had been used to making every fall. Instead they learned to trap the white fox and to trade the pelts for flour, shells and guns" (People of the Deer, 1952. p. 54).

However, when the fur market collapsed, the white men left the barrens without a trace and when the Eskimos arrived with their pelts to trade they found "the trading post stood empty and decayed..." (People of the Deer, 1952. p. 54). The People had forgotten their old ways and no longer had the skills necessary to provide for the long dark winter which was now almost upon them. They now faced slow starvation. Only Franz had stayed in the barrens in the winter of 1946. When his trap lines finally brought him to one of the Ihalmiut's camps, starvation had taken its toll. Of the four igloos three were empty of human beings, their inhabitants having set out in a failed attempt to locate a trading post. In the last igloo, two children remained alive within sight of the frozen corpses of their parents. Franz brought them back the one hundred miles to his cabin. He then returned to search out the camps of the People and distribute what little food he could to those he found alive after months of starvation.

The next day Franz drove his sled three hundred miles south to Deer Lake, to the nearest outpost of white men. The trader there had a Morse code transmitter which Franz used to send a message of help for the People. Churchill's radio station relayed the message south and all Franz could do was wait. The message eventually reached those in authority - and they delayed, skeptical of the validity of the plea for aid. When action finally did take place a plane was "landed at the extreme south end of Nueltin and unloaded its supplies" (People of the Deer, 1952. p. 62). Franz, expecting a flight from

Churchill which was the most direct route, drove to Nueltin "to find the cache which had been made over two hundred miles short of its destination" (People of the Deer, 1952. p. 62). What the government had sent was of no use to starving men. Sacks and sacks of white beans had been sent for people whose world was covered in winter snow and had no fuel for fires. Upon his return to the Little Hills where the people had lived (a round trip of over one thousand miles) Franz found he was too late.

Not only did the Southerners destroy the Ihalmiut's way of life but they also destroyed the Ihalmiut's bodies. At the turn of the century infrequent interaction between the Ihalmiut and our people took place, resulting in disaster. An Ihalmiut named Kakumee who had met white men as a child, left his camp and traveled to the white man's outposts. Upon his return to the camps of the People disaster resulted.

"A strange sickness broke out in the camp of Kakut. Three women sickened at once, complaining of a Great Pain [tuberculosis] which sat on their chests and denied them air for their lungs.

Before the end of that spring more than a third of the People were dead, and the disease had broken the People. In many camps by the river no living men were left to bury the dead. The wolverines, wolves and even the dogs which had been abandoned by death grew fat on the flesh of the Ihalmiut" (People of the Deer, 1952. pp. 212-213).

Of a band numbering over 2000 individuals in 1900, only about three hundred Ihalmiut were still living by 1926. Such was the legacy of the white man's contact with the Ihalmiut.

Mowat criticized the Federal government harshly for their ignorant and thoughtless behaviour in their treatment of the People. A government geologist named James Burr Tyrrell first came into contact with the Ihalmiut in 1896. Thus the federal government had known of the Ihalmiut's existence for fifty years through Tyrrell's reports. However, nothing was done to include them as citizens of Canada and provide them with the government services and social benefits that we enjoy, until after the starvation winter of 1946. Mowat charged the government with inflicting fifty years of exploitation and

neglect on the People. He also pointed out the government's incredible incompetence and willful ignorance of their responsibilities. Mowat wrote,

"[T]here was something to balance the ledger this time, for now a message had gone out. Now the government could not ignore the People any longer, nor plead ignorance of the charges who had been placed in its care by the white man's law. The message had gone out. The response to it had been too slow, and badly bungled,...[but] at long last the government acknowledged that in the great plains there lived a people who were its wards" (People of the Deer, 1952. p. 63).

Mowat also criticizes the actions of a large body of hunters and the appalling ignorance with which they conducted their hunting. Many of the barrenland hunters and trappers noticed a decline in the numbers of deer over the years. They blamed this decline on the "bloodthirsty ravages of that insatiable killer, the Arctic wolf" (People of the Deer, 1952. p. 82). Mowat explained how,

"A white trapper who does not kill more than five hundred deer a year himself will go into a perfect paroxysm of fury as he tells you how the wolves are slaughtering the deer by the tens of thousands. He has no proof, of course; but then, who needs proof against the wolf?" (People of the Deer, 1952. p. 82).

This criticism of society brought Mowat full circle and back to the criticism of the government again. Because of course, the government took up the cry of the trappers and began a full scale extermination of the Arctic wolf. Nobody except Mowat stopped to reason that there had always been wolves and deer in the Arctic and that they had lived in harmony until the coming of the white man. However, Mowat dealt with the wolves many years later in Never Cry Wolf. People of the Deer, was still his battle cry on behalf of the Ihalmiut.

Forty years after People of the Deer was written, Jack McClelland explained the effect that the plight of the Ihalmiut people had on Mowat's future outlook.

"I would say that [Mowat] considers most forms of government as anti-social behaviours. ...I think the main Mowat area is...in terms of civilization and the behaviour of society and [he] is appalled by many things that go on" (Interview, 1989).

However, Mowat's anger at what had taken place did not stop with People of the Deer. He wrote a number of articles which blasted the heads of state and brought the matter to the attention of the general public. An article entitled The Two Ordeals Of Kikik, dealt with the way in which the white men imposed their laws on the Ihalmiut, who could not even comprehend what their crime had been. As Mowat says, "I make it a point of blasting these [government] bastards at every opportunity. Whenever they do anything wrong and I find out about it, I make it public" (Mason, 1986. p. 5).

People of the Deer generated fantastic controversy across the country. Some Members of Parliament even went so far as to deny the existence of the Ihalmiut and branded Mowat as an out and out liar. Other MP's suggested that the book be labeled fictional, "where it belongs, the book is absolutely and totally false" (In Search Of Farley Mowat, 1981). However, this never bothered Mowat, and he continued to take society and its institutions to task, for as he says, "If you tell the truth as you see it, you're bound to be controversial" (Urich, 1982. p. 10). Eventually, however, some positive action did arise from Mowat's efforts. In Integration And The Eskimo: A Success Story, Mowat described how the government was finally providing proper care, education and jobs for the Innuit in 1959.

People of the Deer was Mowat's first book and his first work of criticism. Many have since followed in its wake. In 1955, his second book The Regiment, was published. This book chronicled the history of the Hastings Prince Edward Regiment from the beginning to the end of the Second World War. Mowat was commissioned to write this book and was himself a member of the regiment during the war. Twenty-four years later in 1979, Mowat wrote And No Birds Sang, a chronicle of the events he experienced in Sicily during World War II. Mowat says the book is, "as important a statement as I am capable of, on the inutility and stupidity of war" (Interview, 1989).

The two books are the same in many ways, the major difference being the narrative perspective. In The Regiment, Mowat never refers to himself personally and the narration is in the third person, whereas And No Birds Sang is a personal account of Mowat's own experience. In the two books, Mowat describes the hardships and misery of war, and the incompetence of those in command in Sicily as well as the bureaucratic bungling at home. In addition to their historical importance, they are both fine examples of Mowat's ability to criticize the world in which we live, and are both illustrations of Mowat's best criticisms of anti-social behavior.

Mowat's first complaint about the Canadian government was the lack of proper equipment for the troops. "Thanks to twenty years of governmental neglect, the militia had no uniforms, modern weapons, or anything much else of a military nature" (And No Birds Sang, 1979. p. 19). This situation did not change greatly, for the Regiment was ordered into action out of England and "the staff so managed the affair that during the excursion the Regiment was deprived of its entire administrative arm, its heavy weapons and its food and ammunition" (The Regiment, 1955. p. 28). However, that was soon to become the very least of his concerns. Although he had enlisted in 1940, Mowat was to spend three years in training before seeing active service in 1943. This service was to prove to be the worst that the war could offer.

If the equipment and action were a long time in coming, death was not. Mowat's descriptive abilities bring forth the full horror of wartime death in the two following passages. This is the part of war which drove Mowat to retreat into his childhood memories to escape these grisly realities.

"One of the dead men lay with his face turned toward me. His eyes were open and as yet undimmed...and they were blue, like mine. This was no alien, this youth who must have been about my own age. Like me he sported a wisp of blonde moustache on his sunburned face - a face that was turning dusty yellow as his heart's blood flowed thickly from a chest that had been ripped asunder by a burst from Paddy's Thompson. Thrown on his back by the impact of the heavy slugs, he had fallen with his arms outflung in the way of children when they make angels in the snow" (And No Birds Sang, 1979. p. 84).

"One ghastly vignette from that shambles haunts me still: the driver of a truck hanging over his steering wheel and hiccupping great gouts of cherry-pink foam through a smashed windscreen, to the accompaniment of a sound like a slush-pump sucking air as his perforated lungs laboured to expel his own heart's blood...in which he was slowly drowning" (And No Birds Sang, 1979. p. 112).

These were the images which turned Mowat towards the Arctic upon his return to Canada. He was disgusted by what human beings had done to each other. The war he says "scared the wits out of me, turned my guts to jelly and made turmoil in my head..." (In Search Of Farley Mowat, 1981).

In addition to the mortal risks of war, the physical punishments which were imposed upon the soldiers were sometimes just as fatal. Forced marches which took hours under a blazing Italian sun soon exhausted strong men. On at least one occasion, a soldier was killed when he slipped exhausted, under the treads of the tank he was riding on. The marches wouldn't have been as bad had not the fighting man been forced to carry,

"his rifle and a hundred rounds of .303 in a bandolier slung across his shoulder. The two large pouches on the front of his webbing bulged with four 30-round magazines for his section's Bren. Several Mills, or anti-tank, grenades were clipped to his shoulder straps. Hanging from his belt were his entrenching tool, water bottle and bayonet. His small pack was stuffed with a rubberized groundsheet...a couple of cans of bully beef, a handful of hardtack biscuits; and such oddments as cigarettes, tea and powdered milk were squeezed into the twin halves of his mess tin. Most men were additionally burdened with cartons of 2-inch mortar bombs or anti-tank projectiles. Nobody, including officers, was packing less than sixty pounds" (And No Birds Sang, 1979. p. 106).

If the actual warfare wasn't bad enough the well-deserved periods of rest and relaxation should have been without restriction. However, those in command and the superiors overseas did not agree. After several continual months of exhausting guerrilla warfare, Mowat's unit was permitted a month of rest. However, they were not allowed to fraternize with the native Italians, buy wine or leave the brigade area and had to make

do with one bottle of beer a week. Worst of all they could see the Mediterranean only scant miles away and while the Canadians broiled under a hot sun, British and American units were given a free hand to enjoy themselves in the liberated cities. Mowat's comments sum up the general attitude of the fighting unit towards their present superiors and those at home.

"Each [general] took the opportunity to thank us on behalf of King and Country for our achievements. But concrete demonstrations of gratitude were notable in their absence, both in our blistering purgatory in Sicily and at home in Canada" (And No Birds Sang, 1979. p. 161).

Military resentment also rings loudly in The Regiment. While Mowat's regiment, which had now spent at least three years in action was dwindling in numbers, at home the Canadian government excused all conscripted men from overseas service. The resentment of the Canadian forces was incredible.

"In Canada almost 100,000 Zombie conscripts lived a comfortable and pleasant life, secure in the knowledge that they would never be asked to face the enemy" (The Regiment, 1955. p. 233).

Not only were the conditions, equipment and lack of reinforcements deplorable but so was army intelligence. On several occasions the men were exposed to shell fire from their own guns or were sent into battle with badly inaccurate intelligence reports. The following lyrics written to the melody of a then popular tune, illustrates the lack of faith the men had in their intelligence officers.

"Six and twenty Panther tanks are waiting on the shore,  
But Corps Intelligence has sworn there's only four  
We must believe there are no more,  
The information  
Comes from Corps.  
So onward to Bologna - drive onward to the Po!"  
(The Regiment, 1955. p. 234).

Both And No Birds Sang and The Regiment illustrate very well the way in which Farley Mowat uses his abilities as a writer to criticize society and its institutions. War is the

greatest anti-social act which humankind can perpetrate upon itself. Mowat has recognized this and has shown it to be what it is - death, destruction and human misery. As well, he has shown how additionally dangerous war is. Mowat has criticized the bureaucratic bungling which takes place at all levels, leaving men without proper clothing, food, ammunition or rest or the necessary recognition and appreciation which all human beings require. Mowat calls himself a critic of anti-social behaviour. These two books deal with the single most anti-social act humanity has ever engaged in, and Mowat has criticized that act on every front. His attention to detail is just as keen when he directs his attention towards purely social critiques.

Mowat's most pointed criticism of society at large is contained in the hilarious pages of My Discovery Of America which he wrote after being barred entry into the United States. This book took Mowat only a month to write and while it is very funny it is also very insightful into the ways of governmental behaviour.

After the publication of Sea of Slaughter in 1984, Mowat was contacted by Michael Bauman, a teacher in Chico California who asked Mowat to come to Chico and talk about his latest book. Arrangements were made with several Canadian Consulates stateside and the Canadian Department of External Affairs to arrange a promotional book tour of the American West Coast. The tour was designed to coincide with the American release of Sea of Slaughter in April. On April 23, Mowat arrived at Toronto's Pearson International Airport to fly to Los Angeles. It was there that he was stopped by the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (I.N.S.) and barred from entering the United States. Furthermore, the I.N.S. refused to tell Mowat the reason for his exclusion.

Angry and bewildered, Mowat rushed to the consolation of his friend and publisher Jack McClelland, proposing to forget the incident and go away for the weekend. McClelland would have none of it.

""You'll do no such bloody thing! My God, Farley, don't you realize what's happened here? Canada's foremost writer *proposing to slink away like a whipped cur because Uncle Sam lays one on him?* And," he snorted like an angry horse, "go off and look at effing birds? ...We are going to make those idiots wish they'd never heard your name. The media will go ape over this one..." (My Discovery of America, 1985. pp. 19-20).

It should be understood that both Jack McClelland and Farley Mowat have a deeply ingrained dislike of American institutions and attitudes. This may have played a small part in their motivation to stage the media circus which catapulted them into the headlines of both nations for several weeks. In an interview in 1968 Mowat expressed his concerns and feelings about America.

"I feel a livid hatred. I'm afraid of them, I distrust them, I hate their guts for what they have done to us and for what they have done to my country. I hate them for what they are doing to the world at large. I hate them for what they are doing to themselves; perhaps I hate them most for that" (Billings, 1968. p. 4).

Jack McClelland holds similar views about America.

"Americans are not, although they run into big figures on schlock books, they're not known as a reading nation and rank well down the list on a per capita analysis. America is a lowest common denominator country. A person with any intellectual ability is at a premium there" (Interview, 1989.).

McClelland's comment about intellectual ability certainly rings true when one considers the events which followed Mowat's expulsion. Mowat discovered that he had been placed in the Lookout Book which is a list of over 50,000 people deemed inadmissible to the United States and is a political leftover from the Joseph McCarthy years. Under the McCarran-Walter Act the U.S. government can "exclude anyone, any time on the mere suspicion of being a Commie...the authorities don't even have to give reasons to the people they shaft. They don't even have to *have a valid reason*" (My Discovery of America, 1985. p. 22). Mowat subsequently discovered that noted individuals such as former Canadian Prime Minister, Pierre Trudeau, novelists Graham Greene and Gabriel

Garcia Marquez and other foreign leaders had been listed in the Lookout Book (Winnipeg Free Press, 1987. p. 19). Mowat became enraged.

Mowat had been given two telephone numbers to call if he wished to pursue the matter. One led him to an official at the Rainbow Bridge who promised to get information for him and from whom Mowat never heard again. The second number put him in touch with the U.S. Immigration office in Buffalo. The officials there put Mowat on hold and never answered the phone again! While the Americans returned Mowat's and McClelland's inquiries with a stoic silence the Canadian media had the story on the air by 8:00 PM on CBC, Global TV and CTV.

Mowat and McClelland finally came to the conclusion that his previous visits to the Soviet Union and the resulting book Sibir were the issue. However, the U.S. officials were attempting to use this as an excuse to use innuendo tactics to give Mowat the commie-smear. McClelland suggested that the hunting lobby and the anti-environmental groups in Washington had put the pressure on to keep Mowat out because of his attacks on them in Sea of Slaughter. Mowat decided that the best way to deal with the "cementheads" (Werier, 1985. p. 6) would be to react with ridicule and mockery (My Discovery of America, 1985. p. 31). What followed was a mixture of bitter-sweet hilarity and outright indignation.

Mowat's indignation became even more pronounced when he discovered that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (R.C.M.P.) had been supplying the Americans with a yearly report on him for years. Not only that, but the Department of External Affairs in Ottawa had known that Mowat was going to be barred before he attempted to enter the U.S. Mowat said later that "External [Affairs] was typically gutless, asinine and cowardly in leaving me hanging out to dry" (Clugston, 1985. p. 28). However, true to character, he carried his ridicule to the hilt when Joe Clark, the Minister of External Affairs called Mowat at home on April 24. Clark indicated that the matter could be settled if both sides were willing to come halfway. Mowat was not willing.

"I am only prepared to come about one-tenth-of-one-per-cent of the way. I'm the injured party here. So my bottom line is a free trip to Los Angeles in Air Force One, *after* it has delivered President Reagan's letter of apology" (My Discovery of America, 1985. p. 37).

By about the third day of media attention, the letters started to pour in from U.S. journalists and ordinary citizens offering Mowat their sympathies and apologies on behalf of their government. Of the hundreds he received only two were not positive. As well, newspapers on both sides of the border had rallied to the call to arms. One such article from the San Francisco Chronicle remarked that, "If the whole affair weren't such an unfortunate example of insensitive bureaucracy in action, it might make a hilarious movie" (My Discovery of America, 1985. p. 58). In fact, it soon became apparent that everyone found the whole incident ridiculously funny, except the bureaucrats on each side of the border. Many people felt that it was "an embarrassment and a shame that the most distinguished author now writing on Canadian soil should have his preconceptions about the United States confirmed by its official policy" (My Discovery of America, 1985. p. 73).

Mowat ended the book with an honest evaluation of what he now felt the United States of America to be. In a letter written to Michael Bauman he said,

"Like many of us 'aliens' I nurtured the conviction that the *image* of the U.S.A. so assiduously projected by your various establishments was one with the reality.

I believed that the bullying, arrogant, astonishingly insensitive way your political, commercial and military leaders routinely regard, and all too often treat those of us who live outside the Pale, was a fair reflection of the attitudes of the American people as a whole - even of that portion which ought to have been smart enough to know better.

...I believed that most of you were truly convinced by your own propaganda that the Imperial Eagle had a God-given right, if not a bounden duty, to impose its will upon 'the lesser breeds.'  
I have held to these beliefs through most of my adult life.  
Now I'm not so sure."  
(My Discovery of America, 1985. p. 121).

Farley Mowat has established himself as an effective social critic. He has proven this in many of his books and has shown himself to be a watchdog of both governmental and societal behaviours in this country and others.

In books such as People of the Deer, he has demonstrated that he is a staunch believer in responsible government. And he has levied harsh criticism at the Federal government of Canada for their lack of ethical behaviour and for the injustices which they subjected the native people of Canada to. Mowat has also shown that he is capable of accurate and strong criticism of society's attitudes and thoughtlessness in People of the Deer. He has discussed and proven that it is human beings and not wolves who over hunt and destroy with callous abandon, vast numbers of deer.

In books such as And No Birds Sang and The Regiment, Mowat has illustrated his unique ability to criticize the most destructive and anti-social behaviours that humans engage in. He has demonstrated with vivid clarity the horrors of war and the sloppy bureaucratic bungling with which they are conducted. He has pointed out and brought to public attention the injustices imposed on brave men of battle and the misery and frustrating anger which these injustices create.

Mowat has also shown that he is adept at criticizing and lampooning governmental policies and injustices at home and abroad. In My Discovery of America, Mowat displayed his considerable talents in creating controversy over thoughtless and insensitive actions on the part of governmental agencies.

During his career as a writer, Farley Mowat has demonstrated that he is capable and willing to take on any cause. He is also daring enough to speak his mind and take his message to the public, no matter what the cost. In books such as those discussed in this chapter, Mowat has shown that he is both an Environmentalist and a social critic as well as a critic of anti-social behaviour. He has made himself an environmental and societal watchdog through the books he writes. Neither individuals nor organizations are beyond the grasp of his critical eye. Mowat is able to express in colourful detail and

succinct prose the emotions generated by the actions of his fellow humans. These emotions are often strongly charged with indignation at the injustices he sees taking place around him, whether they be environmental or societal. Clearly Farley Mowat has established himself as one of the most influential and widely read authors living in Canada today. He has demonstrated great environmental awareness and a thorough knowledge of the world around us, as well as proving himself to be an intelligent critic of the society in which we live.

## CONCLUSIONS

Farley Mowat is many things to many people. He is a Canadian patriot, a writer of humor, a writer of non-fiction, an environmental activist and a social critic. However, through his works and as a public figure, he is perhaps best known in his dual roles as an Environmentalist and a Social Critic.

Farley Mowat has led a varied and intense life. And these qualities are readily in evidence in his writing. He fought in World War II, studied wolves for the Canadian Government, visited the Soviet Union, chronicled Western civilization's search for the Northwest Passage, and has written about wolves, whales, owls, dogs, boats, birds and seals. He is a many faceted man with strong intractable and oftentimes controversial ideas and opinions. Curiously, however, in spite of the fact that his works cry out for awareness of the destruction humankind creates, he believes his "work will have no long term effects [and] will not change anything in a major way" (Urich, 1982 p. 10). One wonders therefore, what drives this man to continue along the road he has chosen to follow. Is it possible that Farley Mowat is an incurable romantic, or are the reasons more deeply rooted? It is more likely that the explanation lies in the fact that Mowat has seen what few modern people have seen - the Canadian and Siberian Arctic, wild and free, teaming with life and uncompromised by the presence of humans. Because of this, he is one of the few people who have a true basis for comparison when viewing our modern world of polluted oceans and dwindling numbers of wild species. In this context, it seems clear that Farley Mowat is not a romantic calling forth visions of a perfect world, but rather a voice rising above the winds of technology and civilization, calling to his fellows to gaze about them and see what they have lost and are continuing to destroy. One critic has said of him, "If Farley Mowat is a bit of a fool, as alas, I expect he is, there is no help for it. ...I for one, would rather take my impressions of a vanishing Arctic from a fool who is too little pedant than from a pedant who is too little fool" (Langer, 1977 p. 59). However, is it not said of all great men and women who criticize their societies or propose ideas ahead of their times that they are fools? Perhaps this fool is wiser than we know.

Many people believe that this is true. In particular Mowat's long-time publisher and personal friend Jack McClelland has said of the author,

"I couldn't say this when I was a publisher because I had a lot of authors I was responsible for, but I can now say that I think Farley - without any question in my opinion - is the most important writer we've ever had in Canada, the best writer and has had a greater influence for the good on people whether it's the environmentalists or whatever. I would pick him as - to date - the single most important Canadian author that's ever lived and that from a man who can't punctuate, whose spelling is atrocious and whose grammar is not all that good...and that should give encouragement to a lot of people out there who can't spell very well and want to write" (Interview, 1989).

Farley Mowat is recognized the world over as a writer of stories not novels, truth not fiction. He calls himself a sagaman,<sup>5</sup> and his works subjective non-fiction. His battle cry has always been, "Never let the facts interfere with the truth." Mowat says,

"...I have always been wary of facts, I don't trust them. My experiences in many fields of human activity suggest that facts generally conceal, or at least becloud as much as, or more than, they reveal. They are treated as sacrosanct in a society dedicated to the deification of data" (The Mowat Papers, 1974).

He is a product of our time but strangely reminiscent of an age long past. But of all that can be said of him he is first and foremost a lover of life and our planet, an Environmentalist and a sharp and ever present critic of society's actions towards people and animals alike.

At a time in our history when civilization seems to be rushing headlong towards planet-wide destruction through exploitation of natural and nonrenewable resources, all the while balancing precariously on the edge of nuclear oblivion, Farley Mowat's message is a klaxon of sanity and desperate warning. Through his works he has always sent and

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<sup>5</sup> Mowat likes to think of himself in terms of the tribal storyteller; one who retains racial memory and passes it on to his fellows. Says Mowat, "I was content from the first to be a simple saga man, a teller of tales which, preferably, had a moral of some sort or another, even if I was confused about exactly what it was" (The Mowat Papers, 1974).

continues to transmit, a terrible message to his fellows. We are not the first form of intelligent life to inhabit this muddy globe but we may very well be the last. Mowat says, "I'm worried that we're not only destroying ourselves...but that we're destroying the seedbed from which other forms will come along to take our place" (Bird, 1984 p. 38). In Mowat's mind the time of human domination is rapidly approaching Armageddon. However, our passing may well end all hope of successors to take our place. He is a voice in the night, a cry in the wilderness, pleading for his race to examine their mad dash towards destruction, not only of themselves but all life on earth as we know it.

In this thesis I have examined Farley Mowat in his dual roles as an Environmentalist and as a Social Critic. Through a discussion and an examination of a number of his works, I have shown that Mowat is an Environmentalist because he meets or surpasses all of the characteristics of an Environmentalist. Mowat cares deeply about the survival of all life, including human survival. He has written books which clearly demonstrate the admiration he holds for wildlife and for (Mowat's expression) "natural man". He has shown that he is an environmental activist, and is empathic, caring, and sincere as well as being knowledgeable and understanding. He has on many occasions blown the whistle on individuals and groups engaged in environmentally destructive behaviour and he has physically placed himself between destructive individuals or groups and the environment in support of a cause.

Farley Mowat is a Social Critic because he meets or surpasses all of the characteristics of a Social Critic. Mowat has written many books in which he criticizes society's actions. Mowat's books criticize government, society and the attitudes, injustices and unethical behaviour of both. He is also an anti-social critic, that is, he criticizes the anti-social behaviour human beings perpetrate upon each other and the animate world. Many of Mowat's works also raise a great deal of controversy. Mowat has demonstrated his ability to stir up controversy and his willingness to be in the centre of it. In many of his controversial books, Mowat takes great delight in ridiculing and making a mock of authority figures. His books have great social impact in both the fields of environmental

awareness and social criticism. Through his many books, Mowat has shown himself to be the champion of animate creation and a societal watchdog.

In this study I have also established Mowat's status within the fields of Canadian Studies and Canadian literature. Mowat's works do not belong within the field of Canadian Studies. Canadian Studies involve the examination of Canada in terms of its origins, history, politics, economics, identity and culture. Mowat's books do not address these topics thoroughly if at all. However, his books *do* fall into the field of Canadian literature. The study of Canadian literature entails the study of Canadian authors and their works, the subjects of which may or may not pertain to Canada. Clearly, this is the context in which Mowat's writing should be examined. In Chapter Three of this study I have listed and explained the various categories of Canadian literature and how they differ from similar categories in American or other foreign literature. Mowat can be placed with other Canadian writers who have written in similar areas, expressing similar views. Mowat's works are extremely Canadian in content and are unique unto themselves within Canada.

## **Suggestions For Further Research**

There are many topics which could and should be addressed in the future study of Farley Mowat and his works. Until now he has been badly neglected by the literary establishment in Canada and many more studies deserve to be conducted so that we can understand and appreciate Mowat and recognize his place within Canadian literature. The research suggestions which follow are only a small number of the many topics which remain to be examined.

1. A more in-depth study of Mowat's environmental and socially critical books could be conducted in greater detail and in fact, should be conducted as separate studies.
2. Mowat's background was examined briefly in this study, however, it is obvious that his formative years have had a great impact upon his life and his career as a writer. A bibliographical study of the author, researching the factors which influenced him would be valuable and interesting.
3. Mowat has been shown to be a highly outspoken man, both publicly and privately. He has a tendency to throw himself into the fray and battle fiercely for what he believes in. A psychological study of Mowat's behaviour and upbringing, to discover why he does what he does would be a useful endeavour.
4. A study devoted to a more extensive review of the critical commentary of Mowat's works by other authors should be conducted.
5. A thorough examination of the reasons why Mowat has been so long ignored by the Canadian literary establishment requires urgent attention.
6. A culturally oriented study could be conducted to deal with the question of Mowat's popularity. Why is he so popular in Canada and abroad? Where is he more popular?

7. What have been the effects of Mowat's environmental activities on the general public? Has he raised awareness and has he achieved any positive results? If so, why? If not, why not?
8. What have been the effects of Mowat's social criticisms on the general public? Has social change resulted? If so, why? If not, why not?

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\* Indicates references directly from Mr. Mowat's personal files, which were academically incomplete. These sources unfortunately were unobtainable, which rendered full academic documentation impossible.

\*\* As yet unpublished at this writing.

## APPENDIX A

The Fathers of Confederation were the representatives of all the Canadian provinces in existence in 1866. These men met in London's Westminster Hotel to frame the Constitution of Canada. The British North America Act (BNA) was drafted that year and British Parliament passed the Act early in 1867 and Queen Victoria gave her assent in March. The Act was formally proclaimed on July 1, 1867. For purposes of comparison, the Fathers of Confederation are roughly equivalent to the American Founding Fathers and our Constitution equivalent to the Declaration of Independence. (World Book Encyclopedia, 1962. Vol. 3, p. 119)

## APPENDIX B

### ***Transcript Of An Interview With Farley Mowat***

**Port Hope Ontario, March 27, 1989.**

**DT:** I just wanted to ask you a couple of opening questions to set the tone a little bit and to get your reactions to a few of the things I've found out about you.

Throughout your writing career it's well known that you've created quite a reputation for yourself, and have often referred to it as your "cardboard cut-out". Would you say, therefore, that notoriety and the public eye are a winning combination for an author?

**FM:** They certainly were a requirement when I first started writing. Canadian writers were simply unknown in this country and having a very astute publisher in Jack McClelland, he figured out that the only way to sell Canadian books was to have Canadian authors sell themselves. And he really established this whole concept of putting authors on the road, making them do a road show, making them be entertainers. And try to catch the eye and the ear of the general public so that they would realize that Canadian writers existed as living entities and were human beings, they actually were here and now. Somewhat reluctantly at first, I got into this procedure and found that it wasn't as bad as I thought but carried on perhaps a little too long. It began to become an actual persona after a while. And I found it was influencing my whole life and to a certain degree my writing too.

**DT:** In what ways?

**FM:** Well I was thinking about my self as becoming schizophrenic there were two Farley Mowats. There was one who went out and took off his underwear from under his kilt and threw them in the chandeliers, and there was the private person who

preferred to be alone in the woods with birds and animals. And the two were coming more and more to be very much in conflict with each other. And the more obvious reason; I no longer needed the public persona. My books and my work had established itself with the audience that I wanted and I wanted to space it out, and I did and now I do as little public appearances as possible.

**DT:** And you enjoy that more I take it?

**FM:** Yeah. I don't enjoy it at all, being a public figure, I have to nerve myself to it. It's enormously expensive in terms of psyche and nervous energy and makes me drink too much and smoke too much. It's a painful thing to do, I never really liked doing it. But I did realize the importance of it in the early stages and to a degree I became habituated to it. But I've gotten rid of that particular addiction. I still smoke and I still drink.

**DT:** Two out of three isn't bad.

**FM:** Yeah.

**DT:** What was the hardest book for you to write?

**FM:** Oh gee. That's a question I'm often asked and I find almost impossible to answer. Each book in its own way is an impossible task. I don't think I've ever written a book that I thought was going to be easy and turned out to be easy.

**DT:** Not even books like The Dog Who Wouldn't Be, reminiscences of your childhood?

**FM:** Well that took place under very special circumstances. That was an antodyne against fear. Against terrible distress during the war years. So that was pleasurable, but I had no idea how it was going to turn out. That wasn't a very difficult book to write in the sense that I was simply recapitulating my memories of

the past. Living in a different world because I couldn't stand the one I was living in at the time. I guess in a sense the first book was perhaps the most difficult because that was People Of The Deer. Because I had no conviction that I could do it. I was really groping. Once that was behind me I knew that I could do it once, therefore, the likelihood was that I could do it again. And so it has worked out. But to give you a direct answer, I can do that. The most difficult book I ever attempted to write was Sea Of Slaughter. I didn't know what I was getting into, which is frequently the case with me when I write a book. When I start a book I really don't know where I'm going, what's beyond the fog on the horizon. But that was a terribly difficult book to write because I got more and more depressed as I did the research and as I discovered the enormity of the disaster we had visited upon life on this planet. And I became chronically depressed. I think it ran on for about four or five years and there were two or three times when I said I've had enough of this, I'm not going to finish this book, the hell with it! But then guilt would nag at me after a while. Two kinds of guilt; first of all I was attempting to say something which I thought was important so that was one kind of guilt. The other was the guilt of a writer who feels that if he's not writing he's probably failing to function in some important way, and he gets nervous. So I picked it up each time that I dropped it and finally plugged it through to the end. But I was never so goddamned glad to get rid of anything in my life as I was to get that book off my chest.

**DT:** Having read it I can understand exactly what you mean.

**FM:** Well nobody can read it. It was almost impossible to write because it's unreadable. In essence, it's just one hammer blow after another on the psyche of Homo sapiens. And I'm a member of Homo sapiens so I was getting hit just as hard as the audience was. I don't think I've met anybody yet who said they've been able to read it straight through. Most people say 'Well I read part of it, but I had enough.' Boy, if there was ever over-kill, and that's not a pun, that's what that book's all about.

**DT:** Well I know what you mean. I spent a couple of long weeks reading that in bits and pieces and small doses and the effect was enormous. In contrast to your hardest book, what would you say (if you can) was your easiest book to write?

**FM:** The Boat Who Wouldn't Float. The Boat Who Wouldn't Float was written for fun. I had decided that I had done enough hard work, I had fought enough causes, crusaded enough and deserved a little amusement. So The Boat Who Wouldn't Float was written primarily for my own entertainment. It was very easy to write. I just finished rereading it by the way because I'm using parts of it for an anthology on Newfoundland that I've just finished putting together. And I'm appalled at parts of it, however it does contain some rather good little nuggets about Newfoundland life and Newfoundlanders. So that probably justifies it. No, it doesn't have to be justified. No book has to be justified. If you have to justify a book you probably won't write it and you certainly shouldn't write it. But it's a lightweight piece of entertainment, but as I say it has some nuggets.

**DT:** But didn't it win the Stephen Leacock Award For Humour?

**FM:** So what?

**DT:** So what?

**FM:** So what. Have you ever read the list of winners of the Stephen Leacock Award For Humour?

**DT:** No I haven't.

**FM:** Well don't. It's pathetic. We don't know what humour is in this country at all. And we certainly don't know in the literary sense. I would say that the majority of the books chosen are totally unworthy of being called humour. It is not an elevating award.

**DT:** So that holds no glory for you to have that award?

**FM:** No. To be quite frank with you none of them do. Awards are almost meaningless in my opinion. My reward comes from readership. I would rather have twenty-five letters over the period of a year from people who were moved by something I said - maybe moved to laughter, but moved. I know this sounds rather arrogant, but I would rather have that kind of recognition any day than an award. Official Awards are...oh you know it's ninety percent luck of the draw, luck of who's on the Goddamned selection committee. And so we didn't have anybody from Ontario last year, better have one this year, and this sort of thing. It probably may help sales a little, but even that's dubious. I know Jack always used to argue that point. He used to say that the extra cost of advertising, if an author won the Governor General's Award certainly off-set the additional sales.

**DT:** In reference to the last two questions then, what would you say is your best work or works? What do you feel are the works that show Farley Mowat to the world in the most potent light?

**FM:** Can't answer that because I don't know how the world thinks, but I know how I think. The book that perhaps satisfied me the most was And No Birds Sang. A very delayed reaction, consciously and subconsciously delayed 'cause I didn't want to deal with it. And having dealt with it, it was an enormous satisfaction to me, and I think it may be as important a statement as I am capable of on the inutility and stupidity of war.

**DT:** And there was also the factor that you felt you had to wait until your father had died before you could put that book to press.

**FM:** Yes, I think that that was an excuse I was making to myself.

**DT:** You no longer feel that is true?

**FM:** No, I don't think that. I was just blaming my Father because I didn't want to write it. I didn't want to go back and re-live that whole period. I knew how difficult it would be and I just didn't want to do it.

**DT:** Do you feel that your stature in the eyes of Canadians is more or less than that of other Canadian authors? Or do you care?

**FM:** I'd say it's different. I certainly don't have the kind of stature that Margaret Atwood does, nor would I aspire to it. But my stature is a peculiar one. I guess I've become a kind of everyman's ordinary-type icon to people who read in this country. They've never elevated me to the God-head but they have never consigned me to the depth of forgetfulness either. It's a very difficult thing to describe, and I'm asked very often to define what I think I am to literary people. And so I've become simplistic, and I say 'I'm a Sagaman - I'm a storyteller.' And that is in the really ancient tradition of so-called literature. And that's a good place to be. It's a comfortable sound place to be. It's supported by antiquity, it doesn't force me to posture, to pretend that I'm something that I'm not and it produces the reward that a good storyteller always gets from an audience. You get the feeling of direct reciprocity as a storyteller. As a literary figure I would be looking probably for the plaudits of my peers and of the critical establishment. And that's pretty thin pickings, it's also very dangerous because the knives are out all over the place. One of the great advantages of never having been admitted to the Godhead is that nobody's after my scalp - except people who don't like wolves!! But fellow writers for the most part don't resent me because they feel that where I am is not an area they want to be so there's no direct sense of competition.

**DT:** I suppose that satisfies you?

**FM:** Completely now. It didn't used to. There were times when I used to say Christ Almighty, I write better than most of these literary people do in this country, therefore, I should have some literary recognition on that basis. But that was, as they say in Newfoundland Oinging [*sic*] because I didn't have it all.

**DT:** I can understand that.

In the McMaster Archives there are some stories you've never published. Why not?  
And are you planning to let them go to press after your death?

**FM:** I don't really care what happens after my death, to be quite frank with you. I'm gone and I'm not trying to preserve or perpetuate illusions or reputations beyond death. I mean that is the ultimate stupidity of Homo Sapiens to think that we can do that, or that it matters! We matter while we're alive, while we're functioning, after that - darkness. Most of them are not worth publishing anyway. You know I've got a drawer in my filing cabinet here that McMaster hasn't got. It probably contains half a million words or maybe a million words for all I know of uncompleted work.

**DT:** And you have no interest in going back to complete them?

**FM:** No. Occasionally if I'm feeling depressed about what I'm working on I'll go back and dig into that file and then I feel great! I say gees you've come a long way Farl - you used to write this kind of shit!! No I don't intend to do anything with them and I haven't instructed the Literary Executor what he's going to do, I'll leave that up to him. But I won't be around so I don't care what happens.

**DT:** So it won't matter to you even if someone does decide they're worth publishing?

**FM:** No. I think they'll probably disappoint an audience if they do.

**DT:** It's been said that you're Canada's most well known author and you're probably the only Canadian author a lot of Canadians will ever read. Who have you found makes up your readership?

**FM:** It's very diverse. There is no narrow strata in which I find myself or I find my readers. They span the gamut. I can't define them. If you had a chance to look through the files at McMaster you'd find they come from all bloody areas. Except, there are two areas I don't get letters from fans, one is the literary establishment and one is the business aristocracy. For some reason these two seem to be outside my reach, I can't get at them.

**DT:** In the film "In Search Of Farley Mowat" you said that your father had a great influence on you and in fact made great pains to state that it would be unfair to not acknowledge that influence. In what ways did he influence you and where do you feel his influence the most?

**FM:** Well, he influenced me mostly I think in terms of technique as a storyteller. He was a librarian and a great reader and storytelling; novels, were his life. So I read a lot - and this is the conditioning reflex - I read a lot when I was very young, I read very catholic reading mostly and it influenced me in terms of osmosis I guess into recognizing good writing and to be able to distinguish it from bad writing. It undoubtedly gave me some impulse to become a storyteller myself. He didn't do a hell of a lot in a conscious way but subconsciously he was enormously influential. I grew up in a world of words and that's the background. If I'd grown up in a caribou-Eskimo encampment, my background would have been caribou and functioning on the land, and this is just a direct transposition.

**DT:** So you are saying in a sense that you're a product of your environment?

**FM:** Yes. And he of course was the major part of my environment because of the fact that I was so peripatetic or he was, I never had a chance to grow into a community

anywhere. All my life it's just been two or three years here, two or three years there, two or three years there, so I had to look for substitutes for where I belonged. And because of his great interest in birds and writing, I guess felt that I came to belong to that area more than to any real physical area. That combined with my sense of belonging to the rest of animate creation. That kept me sane.

**DT:** In the same way that you were influenced by your father, you have said that you were influenced greatly by your Uncle Frank and you've mentioned him in a number of your books. I'm wondering what was your relationship with your Uncle Frank and what was his influence on you and your subsequent interest in the environment?

**FM:** Well the way I felt about him was worshipful awe. He scared the hell out of me. What Frank did for me was to legitimize a problem for me. I didn't get along with my fellow human beings of my age group for a variety of reasons, most of which you already know, so I turned more and more to the other animals. But I felt that this was somehow illegitimate, that it wasn't right that I should be doing that. And what he did was to legitimize my interest and affinity for other animals. 'Cause he was a big dominating guy and people respected him, and if it was alright for *him* to go out fiddling around and sniffing into bird's nests and so on, then it was OK for me. So it was a small thing but a big thing he did. He didn't teach me much but he gave me confidence and the conviction that I could legitimately disassociate myself from being part and parcel of my peer group at school and could do what I wanted to do.

**DT:** Getting back to what you were just saying, you've said that all your life you were an outcast as a child and that was a result of your diminutive size and a result of your constant moving from one community to another. Do you think that as a by-product of that, your affinity with animals was a subconscious search, and probably

a conscious one as well for a stable environment and one of unconditional acceptance?

**FM:** Umhum. No, it's not unconditional. The animal world, the animate world is conditional. You have to meet certain conditions to achieve acceptance there. I learned how to do that, at least the doors were open. You know, I'm not a...what's the word for people who hate people? Misanthrope? I guess that'll do. I'm not a misanthrope, I like people as much as I like any of the other animals *but* individually and selectively. With the other animals I tend to like them generically, I tend to trust them generically to be what they appear to be; with human beings one never knows.

**DT:** In relation to that, how many pets have you had over your lifetime and what kinds?

**FM:** Everything - of one type or another. Whatever happened to come to hand or whatever happened to come to the back door with a broken wing - or whatever. I would accept it. And my mother God bless her, who was very long suffering about this because she was not a naturalist. She was a well-brought-up lady of her era, and you didn't keep rattlesnakes in the bureau drawer of your room in her childhood. But she was very permissive, it used to upset her I'm sure but she kept her difficulties to herself and gave me freedom. That's what my parents did for me really. They both gave me enormous freedom to do what I felt I had to do. And they encouraged me. I don't think I was ever cursed with the restricted and restrained middle-class mold that so many people had in my generation; and so many have *now*. The mold is getting even more rigid now. Despite the fact that we talk about individual freedom, you know free love, free this, free that, the mold is just as tight as ever and maybe tighter. Eventually people get forced and directed into what the ad-mass society wants. That didn't exist in my day it was a different kind of opportunity.

**DT:** In terms of animal rights, do you see yourself as a crusader of animal rights or as a crusader of causes?

**FM:** Well I've always been involved in causes and crusades but I'm not essentially a crusader. It's just that they're there and are problems that I see that require some kind of solution. And I have this pugnacious quality in my character. Show me a fight and by-God I'll take it, as long as it doesn't involve fists. Physically I avoid fights, 'cause I get the ass beaten off me. But any other kind of fight if it's in a worthy cause I tend to become an activist. Animal rights? I don't believe that animals have *rights*. I think the word's bad.

**DT:** What word would you choose?

**FM:** I'm not sure. I'm not sure there is a phrase that would cover it. But they have at least equal claim, to be allowed to survive and function according to their structures, their laws - which are the natural laws - with us. The claims are equal; we have no superior claims.

**DT:** This pertains directly to the crux of my thesis - How do you see yourself in the context of a social critic?

**FM:** Well I'm not terribly interested in criticizing human society per se in overall structure but in detail yes. But what I am is a critic of anti-social behaviour. And the human species has become the most anti-social form of life - of the social animals - on this planet. And that is extremely dangerous to us, and to every other form of life. So that's the crux, the core of my motor. That's the way I operate. Because of this absolute conviction that we are screwing up - have screwed up - as a social animal and in the process are screwing up everything around us. That's oversimplified but that's the essence of it.

**DT:** And directly related to that, how do you see yourself in the context of an environmentalist, or naturalist, whichever term you prefer?

**FM:** Well I see myself as part of animate creation. I don't see a division of "them" and "us". So what happens to them - you see I'm using the term - what happens to us happens to them and what happens to them happens to us. It's all part and parcel of the whole. So it's a survival instinct I think carried beyond my own species. I want to survive; every living thing does and survival is threatened, my individual survival, the survival of my kind - my species is threatened, and the survival of all of my fellows - nonhuman - is threatened. So I'm fighting for survival, if that makes me an environmentalist, then I'm an environmentalist. But I don't like the narrow catch words. We invent words and then we give them new meanings to suit our needs. You have to be very careful before you allow yourself to be tagged. I prefer not to be tagged.

**DT:** And you're a very difficult man to tag.

**FM:** Well that's not because I'm trying to escape anything; it's because I distrust tags. We are the tag-making animal, not the tool-making animal. We have to categorize everything; we have to slot everything that we can't deal with and the slots are usually artificial and they're often dishonest. So I like to stay away from tags.

**DT:** What do you see as the most pressing environmental issue facing the planet today?

**FM:** The single greatest threat is over population of our species, unquestionably. We're going to be - what? Four million by the year 2000? and we're doubling every twenty years. Anybody who has any logical capabilities has to be aware that this is impossible to maintain. It can only be maintained on the up slope by enormous destruction of the maintenance mechanism of the world at large. It's the core problem and don't ask me what we're going to do about it.

**DT:** I wasn't going to.

You've said in a recent article that you spend only half as much time writing now and have no real compulsion to write anymore. Why is that and is that still true?

**FM:** Yeah that's true to a degree. The fire has burned pretty low. And I justify this to myself by saying well I've put in a good shot. I'm 68 this May and I haven't exactly sat around on my ass, I haven't been a couch potato, I haven't been totally self serving, I feel quite entitled to ease up. But that is probably only a rationalization. I think the real reason I've eased up is because I'm afraid it's a losing battle. I don't think we're going to make it.

**DT:** You also said in interviews before that your work will have no long term effect and will not change anything in a major way. Again, do you still feel this way and if so why?

**FM:** I don't think anything is going to change the direction we're taking. I think we're heading for the abyss and nothing short of turning time back a couple of million years would alter that. I think it's inevitable but that fits of course with the history of life on this planet. Nothing lasts forever, we have just foreshortened our time on earth by reason of our big-fucking-brain.

**DT:** In relation to that, how do you think public awareness has changed towards environmental issues since you began writing and now?

**FM:** Oh, it's changed enormously.

**DT:** For the better?

**FM:** Oh, yeah. And the reason for that is quite simple. People are getting scared. They're getting scared in their guts. It's no use scaring people in the head, 'cause

they can always talk or think their way around it. But when they get scared in their guts, when they get scared in their germ-plasm then things begin to change; they begin to look upon things differently. And the majority of people in the world today are feeling this threat. They're feeling a deep-rooted subjective, biological fear. And that's the essence of the great growth of the environmental movement.

**DT:** In 1982, you were quoted as saying "I think we're a really bad species." Since then have government actions or public awareness given you any reason to alter your opinion?

**FM:** They've strengthened it. I don't think we're just a bad species anymore I think we're the worst possible species. There is no good in us.

**DT:** As a species?

**FM:** As a species - no, zilch.

**DT:** And nothing has changed your opinion?

**FM:** No it's reinforced it.

**DT:** I wanted to move on to some questions concerning literary criticism of both you and your work. One of the major ones I have is that when I was researching this project I had an enormous amount of difficulty finding literary criticism of you, personally, literally, anything. There was one by Alec Lucas which was a short text written in 1976 and of course the reviews, book reviews and interviews. Why do you think there's been so little written about you and your work from a critical literary standpoint?

**FM:** Well I think it's very simple. I'm outside the establishment. I don't have any of the criteria that are required to be a member of the literate. I'm not saying this with

bitterness, it's just a fact. And now I believe a very happy fact, from my point of view. Although there were times earlier on when I didn't think so. Now I think it's marvelous, because they leave me alone. It's very difficult to categorize me. Librarians have always had this trouble, they never knew where to slot my books. They couldn't fit them into the Dewy Decimal system. Academics are of the same type of mind, they like to be able to slot things - fit them in. And they can't fit me in anywhere, I don't fit anywhere. So they just go around me, over me, past me. I'm irrelevant to the literary scene in this country.

**DT:** So I would assume that you're glad you're largely ignored by the literary community and you wouldn't prefer to have volumes of material written about you in the same way Margaret Laurence, Margaret Atwood and Pierre Berton have been recognized?

**FM:** Well I can't see any utility in that kind of operation. I think if all the people who wrote literary diagnosis [sic] were to confine themselves to storytelling, to doing the primary thing, they would be more useful and they would probably enjoy life more. But they wouldn't reach high levels of academic acclaim. It's the old bit you know, which is the most interesting, which is the better behaviour pattern? To sit at a table pulling the wings off flies and counting the scales on the wings? Or helping flies to fly? I prefer to be in the second category.

**DT:** And you always have remained there.

**FM:** Yeah. As I said with some reservations. It used to hurt me a little bit; it used to make me feel envious when people that I knew received literary awards and great literary emoluments and I knew I was as good a writer if not better than most of them. And so I would feel neglected at that point. But eventually I realized that what was happening was that I had been given carte blanche. Nobody was after my tail, after my hide, nobody was interested in skewering me in order to raise their own reputation and that in a sense I was living a charmed life as a writer. The part

of a writer's life that matters is his audience or her audience, *not* the critics - they're the fleas on the elephant. As long as your audience is responding you're doing what you should be doing.

**DT:** In 1985 in an article in Alaska Magazine you were heavily criticized by their Outdoors Editor Jim Rearden who interviewed Dr. A.W.F. Banfield and Dr. Douglas Pimlott. In the article they collectively called you a plagiarist and a liar. What's your reaction, what's your response?

**FM:** (Chuckle) Well, I don't really bother to respond much to that kind of criticism. A plagiarist - because I have used other people's material, not quoting them, but other people's experiences, I've built on other people's experiences - sure and I will continue to do so. A novelist does that, you give them the accolade. And I am not a Non Fiction writer by the way, I am a Subjective Non Fiction writer. "Never Let The Facts Interfere With The Truth" my old phrase. Basically, the criticism is that I wasn't a scientist. Well I'm not a scientist. A scientist is another picker of wings off flies, a masser of facts sometimes and quite often trivial facts and then manipulating them to a conclusion. I don't do that, I skip the intervening phases and go straight to the conclusion - subjectively, emotionally. And this irritates scientists to Christ's end. They hate it. Banfield of course has every reason to dislike me intensely because I make a mock of him in Never Cry Wolf. He was the epitome of the academic scientist concerned with his career, and I laughed at him. And of course people don't forgive that. Pimlott, I don't know. Some of this seems to come and go. Sometimes he's friendly to me and sometimes he isn't. But I guess he's dead now isn't he?

**DT:** Yes. I believe in between 1977-79 he died.

**FM:** There you are. I'm outliving them all. (Chuckle) No, that kind of criticism means almost nothing to me. It used to get me angry. Now it doesn't even get me angry.

**DT:** You just dismiss it as what it is.

Why do you think your books aren't studied at the university level in Canada in the same way that Margaret Atwood's are or anybody else?

**FM:** Well I've just answered that. I'm not a member of the literary establishment.

**DT:** But in many ways your books are just as good, and easily as readable and the stories are exactly as good if not better as you said yourself. Now I understand that you dislike dissection and dissectors as much as you dislike facts but I'm still curious as to why...even that you're outside the pale....

**FM:** Well I can't answer the question. Maybe you can - you're inside the pale maybe you know why. I don't really know why and I haven't concerned myself with it to any great degree. I know that many of my books are in primary and secondary schools. And I'd sure as hell rather have them there than the universities.

**DT:** Why?

**FM:** There they have an effect. In university they're simply something to be studied and dissected.

**DT:** In comparison with that, how are you regarded within the literary community in Canada?

**FM:** I don't really know. I know that some of the literary stars at one time or another have tried to rise to my defense. They thought I needed defense or they thought I needed help. Margaret Laurence is one, Atwood's done it too, and they have said very kind things about me as a writer. But that doesn't affect the establishment's view.

**DT:** This is a question that really interests me. Why do you think that up 'til now, no one has ever written a post-secondary degree thesis about you and your work?

**FM:** Well I think that that's obvious. Thesis's are written inside the academic world, for academics and I'm a non-person as far as that whole world is concerned. So it's a very brave *or stupid* guy says he looking directly into your eye, who would propose doing a thesis about me. I'm fascinated by the fact that you're doing it and by the fact that you're being allowed to do it.

**DT:** Well I think you're someone who's been largely neglected.

**FM:** UmHum. By academia.

**DT:** Yes, certainly. It may be conscious choice but I don't necessarily think it's right. And I think you deserve as many accolades as any other writer in this country has received if not more.

**FM:** I get 'em.

**DT:** Yes. But vicariously.

**FM:** Yeah. No! I don't get 'em vicariously, I get 'em directly. I get 'em directly in the letters I receive and the people who stop me in the street and talk to me.

**DT:** I'm speaking of public recognition. Not general public but in the kind that you've said you dislike, the awards and the prizes and that sort of thing. You're the type of man I think who should be recognized, especially at this point in your life after the amount of work you have done.

**FM:** But do you think it matters whether academe recognizes me or not? I have my recognition. It's quite satisfactory. And it's a generic recognition, it's a man-in-the-

street recognition, and that is an anti-snobbery speaking by the way. That's the kind of recognition that has merit in my opinion, certainly as far as my emotions are concerned. It gives me infinitely greater satisfaction than say...some university professor decided he was going to teach a course on me. I'd say that's fine - go ahead, but it would mean absolutely nothing to me in terms of buoying my ego or in terms of satisfying the need for reward that all animals have.

**DT:** How did your first marriage affect your writing, both the marriage itself and the divorce afterwards.

**FM:** Hard to say. Probably not very much. I was writing and that's what I wanted to do and that was the most important thing in my life and my first wife certainly didn't make it difficult for me. Our relationships made our lives together difficult but it certainly was no fault of hers. I harbour no ill feeling or sense of injury about her and fortunately she doesn't about me which is kind of nice. I guess that I would have to say that I am not a solitary animal and that without the solace, and pleasure and companionship of a woman, a wife, a mate, I would probably become non-functional pretty fast. So that on that very very basic level both my wives have had an enormous influence on me. But not in terms of intellectual direction or any of the superficial stuff. As a loner I wouldn't be able to function.

**DT:** I'm curious why you've never written about your children and how they've affected your writing if at all?

**FM:** Not at all. I'd be very cautious about writing about my natural son. Because the natural son of a celebrity, the son of a celebrity, is under enormous pressures and it makes life very very difficult. So I've tried to keep him out of most of my writing, in fact I have. The only reference I've ever made to him was to dedicate one of the children's books to him and David my adopted child. But they haven't had an enormous influence. They've had a very marginal influence.

**DT:** And have they shown any interest at all in following the path you've....

**FM:** David, we don't know where David is; he vanished some years ago, Sandy is a smart little guy, not so little, he consciously, although he has a natural bent as a writer, he consciously decided not to go near it, not to touch that one with a stick. He went into radio when he was about eight years old. Had his own little radio station in his imagination, station F.L.U.B. and he's stayed with it. It gives him an area of expertise where he can go his own way, do his own thing and he's not being constantly confronted with the comparison with his father.

**DT:** Yes, and I guess that that's a hard....

**FM:** Listen, I know so many kids of writers and stage people who've gone absolutely for a burton [sic] because of the conflict, trying to be like Daddy was or Mommy was.

**DT:** Do you see your role as a social critic as one which you felt compelled to fill or have you simply fallen into it as a by-product of your work?

**FM:** Look, I'm not a conscious animal. I almost never think of why I'm doing what I do. I do what I feel compelled to do. I am motivated by the subjective part of my being and anger is one of the subjective elements you know. And when things start boiling up inside me I want to do something about it. And I do it but I very seldom consciously think about it. It's difficult to have a rational conversation with me as you're finding out because I take refuge from rationality in subjectivism.

**DT:** You're playing Plausible Ike.

**FM:** Yeah. But in this case it's real. That's the only area that I trust. I don't trust myself intellectually, I trust my instincts I trust my feelings. I'm much more feminine in that regard than most men.

**DT:** I see. How has Jack McClelland affected your work?

**FM:** Oh, enormously, he provided the structure in which I could work free of monetary problems, free of pressures, free of difficulties. He ran interference for me all his life. Whenever there was a problem coming along, I'd just go tell Jack and Jack would run interference. I think more than anybody else, more than any individual he has made it possible for me to be what I am as a writer. So my debt to him is enormous. But not in terms of telling me what to write.

**DT:** Except in the case of "Virunga", did he not come to you with that suggestion?

**FM:** Yeah, yeah he did.

**DT:** Tell me a little bit about that.

**FM:** Well I have a lot of mixed feelings about that one. That shouldn't really have happened. I'm not a biographer, I'm an autobiographer I write about myself essentially and I got suckered into that one.

**DT:** Why do you say suckered? I think it was one of your best works.

**FM:** Well I'm not sure I would agree with you. It's a book I would have been happy not to write. If I'd never written that one I'd never have missed it. Other books I guess I would have missed if I hadn't written them.

**DT:** Why though? I'm still not clear as to why?

**FM:** I just don't feel comfortable writing about somebody else, I know perfectly well that I'm never going to understand them. All I'm going to do is a simulacrum of reality. And I like reality, I like the real thing and the only real thing that I can be convinced is real is me. Dian Fossey, if I hadn't lucked onto or I guess in desperation figured

out the procedure of the two voices and subjugated my voice to hers I don't think I ever would have finished it. It was only because I was able to tell myself that really I'm doing a posthumous autobiography, a biography of her, I'm helping her to do her own that I was able to deal with it at all.

**DT:** How has Claire influenced your work?

**FM:** Well, she has provided the opportunity for me to work as I said earlier very strongly. Without her God only knows what would have happened, I would have been drunk or committed suicide or jumped off Niagara Falls or something probably years ago. But she doesn't influence what I write about. Or how I do it.

**DT:** Does she help you proof read?

**FM:** Used to. In the early days she did a lot of my typing for me before I could afford a typist. You know I've only been in a fairly affluent position for the last ten or fifteen years. People think of me as being a very affluent writer but I'm not. I'm comfortably well off, I'm comfortable. But shit, we used to scrape, scrape and scratch for the first twenty years of our marriage. So she was an enormous assistance there. But nobody has influenced me, nobody I can think of consciously, has influenced the direction of my work. That comes from some deep unknown source and I don't want to start poking fingers at it. Keep your finger out of the mainspring, always. Of course I've been influenced enormously by the whole world I grew up in, everything I've read, the people I've met, the people I've talked to, but there's no single vital external influence that I'm aware of. Maybe you'll find one.

**DT:** Maybe.

In 1977 Elinor Langor pointed out that your sense of humour was juvenile and that the sexual atmosphere of your books is approximately that of the playground at

recess. She says that if your observations of other forms of life were as limited as those of your own species your work would be virtually useless. What's your response?

**FM:** Well, she's probably right about my sense of humour, I don't aspire to being anything much above normal. And I don't write about women because I'm very uncomfortable writing about love.

**DT:** Why?

**FM:** I don't know. I just am so I don't write about it. Love is an area, that...I can write about love of other animals, but I have great difficulty in writing about love of my own kind. That is to say sexual love. It's just a blockage, and it's never been an area which was important to me as a writer so I haven't worried about it. But as far as my sense of humour is concerned screw her, I've got a goddamned better sense of humour than she has! (Laughter)

**DT:** True and I know a lot of people would agree with you.

I just have a few closing questions to wind down with. You've commented continually this afternoon about my use of electronics and I'm beginning to wonder if this question is even worth asking but do you still type on your quote end quote aging Underwood? Or have you graduated to the world of computers and wordprocessing?

**FM:** I have retreated at a very high rate of speed from the world of computers. My revenge on the computer is to buy up every old Underwood I can find. My wife feels exactly the same way and between the two of us I think we now have about twenty-five or thirty Underwood uprights one of them goes back to 1898. And they all work. We've had them all maintained and repaired by an old typewriter repair guy in Toronto who's probably the last human who can repair a typewriter. And

he's brought them all up to number one level, and we feel we've got enough Underwoods to last us not only our lifetimes but a long way into the great beyond.

**DT:** Good! Great!

It's been rumoured, it's not rumoured it's a fact that you're writing your autobiography or attempting to...

**FM:** Thinking about it. I've been writing my own autobiography all my life in bits and pieces.

**DT:** Now are you thinking of something all in one...

**FM:** No I'm thinking of filling in the gaps.

**DT:** Well in connection with that the word 'retirement' comes to mind.

**FM:** Not to my mind!

**DT:** Ok good. Because I was wondering if there's a retirement in Farley Mowat's future or will you continue to be a burr under the saddle of Canadian consciousness for a long time to come?

**FM:** Probably not Canadian consciousness. I feel that that's wasted effort, trying to have any effect on the political structure in this country and that includes the business structure which is the political structure. It's just wasted effort. I haven't got the energy to waste on that any more. So I probably will not be a burr under the establishment's blanket for very much longer, I will continue to try and be a burr under the human conscience for what we are doing to the living world, of which we are a part. That'll never leave me; at least I hope it doesn't, if it does then I'm finished. And that's the deep over riding compulsion I've always had. Didn't recognize it for a long long time. When I was writing about Eskimos, I didn't realize

what the hell the basic compulsion was. It was probably only in the last seven, eight, ten years that I've come to a slow awareness of what the mainspring was. And of course that has reinforced my belief in the subjective subconscious. Because the subconscious knew what the hell had to be done and gently manipulated me for the first fifty years of my life into doing it. It didn't have to tell me, if it had gone into my head and I'd begun to think about it, I would have rejected it.

**DT:** I heard in town today that you've built another home just outside of Port Hope.

**FM:** Aw shit! That is a disaster because everybody knows about it. It was supposed to be a secret. We didn't even stick around while the house was being built.

**DT:** Well what the question was leading up to was, that in "In Search Of Farley Mowat" you said your life was like a train schedule and you'd been continually hopping from one place to another. You've been in Port hope now for upwards of twenty years, I believe, and you've said that you've been searching for a permanent haven. Is Port Hope your permanent haven or are you anticipating another move?

**FM:** It's as close as I'm going to get until I get the final permanent haven. The narrow house, eight feet long two feet square. I don't belong anywhere, and I never will. I've come as close to belonging as I probably can in Port Hope, just through having been here for that length of time. But Port Hope is now changing so rapidly that the thing that I was familiar with is now departing from me. I'm not departing from it, but that's a universal syndrome, that affects every human being in Western society. The rug is being pulled out faster and faster. So even if you do belong somewhere, if you belong to a little out port in Newfoundland, the rug's being pulled out from under you, you can stay there but it's all changing around you. Nobody is going to belong anywhere in very short order on this planet.

**DT:** And then what do you think is going to happen?

**FM:** Oh that's disaster that's chaos. We're a social animal we're a territorial animal and we've spent millions of years evolving, everything about us is evolved to work best in a tight little, *little* social order. Interdependence, very important. We're constructed that way and if we abandon that or if it disappears for us we're going to be just like little motes, little atoms floating around in space and we're not going to reconnect with anything. And that's one of the problems. We can't connect with the living earth anymore because we're becoming aliens upon it.

**DT:** Can you tell me a little bit about your experiences in Burgeo and if that sort of situation arose again today how would you react to it or would you react to it the same way you did twenty years ago?

**FM:** No.

**DT:** Why not?

**FM:** Self preservation. I'm not willing to take the physical risk anymore. What little I have to hang onto now I'm hanging onto. I've allowed a great deal of the support system of my life to be eroded because I took stands. No more. I'm not going to become a martyr and that's in effect what I was in Burgeo, I martyred myself. I martyred my wife, I ruined our life there, I made it impossible to go on living there. I did it, consciously, and with good cause but I wouldn't do it again. I've done it; once is enough, I'm not a masochist.

**DT:** I'm curious about the movies that were made about Never Cry Wolf and A Whale For The Killing. I have a couple of specific questions about them. How much control, input, consultation did you have over the films when they were made?

**FM:** Absolutely none on Whale For The Killing and very little, I could have had more on Never Cry Wolf, but I deliberately didn't because I figured that I didn't know the

business and any intrusions I made upon it would probably be counter productive. I acted as a sort of moral supporter for Carol Ballard and Lewis Allan and for the cast. I went up and spent a week with them once when things were really bad in the Yukon, things were beginning to fall apart, they were three years in the making and having problems. So I went up and cavorted around, got drunk with the guys and had a lot of fun, and they shot some film of me which was terrible. But as far as input, apart from that none. But Ballard pulled off, what is almost the impossible, which is to make a good movie about a good book that worked. It's on parallel tracks with the book and they both get to the same station in the end. I think it's a good film, I enjoyed it.

**DT:** How about A Whale For The Klling?

**FM:** Oh a total disaster.

**DT:** And how did that happen? How can a producer or a director take an author's book and make such an absolute schmoeze [*sic*] out of it without your input?

**FM:** Because the author has no say. They buy the film rights and the author is outside.

**DT:** But do you not own the rights to your own material? Can you not say I do not want a film made of this book?

**FM:** The choice is very simple. There's one possible, well there's always more than one alternative. You can say yes or no. Sell the book, sell the rights or not sell them.

**DT:** I see so once you sell the rights you sell all the rights for everything. So did they come to McClelland and Stewart to get the rights to make the film or what?

**FM:** Well I had an American agent in those days, and they came to the agent and the agent said they're offering this much money, take it up front that's all you're ever going to see and I needed the money. But you don't know what they're going to do with it. It's like casting a baby out into the street. You just don't know what's going to happen, it may get trompped on by a horse.

**DT:** Right. And I think that's what happened in that case.

**FM:** Oh God. A terrible film.

**DT:** For each film what was your reaction when you learned that those books were going to be filmed?

**FM:** Well one is always pleased that somebody's going to make a film you know that's part of our heritage. Film is the big thing. If somebody's going to make a film of your book boy you're lucky. My reaction when I saw the finished film was basically a shrug as far as Whale For The Killing is concerned. But my reaction for Never Cry Wolf was one of almost undiluted delight. I was very happy with it. It said what I wanted said.

**DT:** And that's unusual in the film industry.

**FM:** Very.

**DT:** You were lucky.

**FM:** Extraordinarily. I've only had two full length films made of my books, but if there'd been twenty I have been extraordinarily lucky if one had worked as well as Never Cry Wolf. So I'm well up. I've got a 50/50 batting average.

**DT:** Tell me about some of the other projects you're working on now.

**FM:** Well I'm doing a book on the conservation/environmental movement in Canada which is an exploration, of the people involved, the organizations involved and the mood and the feeling for it in the country. And this consists of 14 interviews, I call them conversations, that I've done with 14 prominent individuals. Then the other half of the book is being done by my co-author Wade Roland who did most of the research on the Virunga book. And he's doing a series of essays, on aspects of the movement. And this book will be out in oh, August, next spring, I don't know.

**DT:** And have you chosen a title for it yet?

**FM:** The working title is Front Line. But I don't like that. I don't like military analogies.

**DT:** No, I guess a lot of people would sympathize with you.

**FM:** But then I'm doing this assembly, anthology sort of, none of these words really fit. I've always wanted to write a book, a whole book about Newfoundland and I never did. I wrote bits and pieces, bits and pieces and I was bitching about this to Harold Horwood who's an old friend of mine and Harold said, "Well you silly fucker, you've already done it. All you have to do is bring it together!" So I started reading the seven books that deal with Newfoundland and I find that by selecting fairly massive passages from them they blend and give me a continuity and a whole picture.

**DT:** With very little editing on your part.

**FM:** But I'm doing a lot of re-writing. I always do that with my books. That's one of the reasons I never like to read my own books; I always start editing. But since this is going to be republished, I'm doing a lot of editing.

**DT:** And tell me a little about your autobiography, as such. Born Naked I believe is the title you've chosen.

**FM:** Well that's my little joke. That's meant to throw people off. By the time they get through chuckling they've forgotten what they asked. I don't know, it's hard to say. It might be one thing it might be several others. I won't know until I write it. But I will start seriously writing on a piece of it this summer when I get down to Cape Breton. I can't do it here.

**DT:** And how long do you anticipate the book will be?

**FM:** Who knows?

**DT:** That's another unknown for you?

**FM:** I don't know, I never know. As I say I go into a fog each time I start working on a book.

**DT:** And this is a filling in the gaps of the parts of your life you've already shared with your readership.

**FM:** Yeah, the book that I think I might do next would be the end of the war. Which turned into a weird weird thing, with me in Europe wandering around Bucshi with all sorts of authority but nobody in charge of me. Collecting German weapons, hitting their research centres and building up a collection of stuff, it was totally and absolutely illegal. I ended up chartering - on my own authority, a 6000 ton liberty ship out of Antwerp harbour to bring my collection home. It cost one hundred and ten thousand dollars and the Canadian government is still wondering who authorized it. But this was some catch 22 stuff. It was my reaction to the fighting and I was taking nothing seriously, I was thumbing my nose at authority and dropping handfuls of graphite in all the machinery. And then there is the switch, I

came home and searched for something of merit to keep me going and then I went to the Arctic. And it's a composite picture of these two aspects, that may be the next book, I don't know.

**DT:** And those are the projects you have lined up for the next little while?

**FM:** Oh, I've got about forty or fifty. I have a list beside my desk over in the house where I work. I don't work here for obvious reasons, people come and sit on the couch and talk to me. And I'd rather talk than write.

**DT:** Oh, really,

**FM:** Oh, sure it's easier. You don't have to edit it. Somebody else can do that. No, I've got a list as long as your arm but none of them are ever going to get written. Well maybe one or two, who cares?

**DT:** You seem a very relaxed and unassuming person, not what I was led to believe from everything I've read of yours and about you and the films I've seen about you, I was more prepared for, not as blatant a portrayal of the cardboard cutout that I knew you used to portray but I was expecting something a little more titillating and it's a pleasant surprise to find out that this part of the real Farley Mowat that I'm seeing is....

**FM:** Well I'm an amiable guy. But when I'm put in a situation of more than one or two people, I tend to put up my barriers. One or two people that I know is fine, but strangers, that's another primitive aspect. We're all like that.

**DT:** Well thank you very much Mr. Mowat.

**FM:** You're welcome.

## APPENDIX C

### ***Transcript Of An Interview With Jack McClelland***

**Toronto Ontario, May 4, 1989.**

**DT:** I just had a few questions I wanted to start out with to set the tone and get some background information. When did you first meet Farley Mowat?

**JM:** I can't put a date on it. I met him initially when we published his first book, and I would explain that it was initiated by the Atlantic Monthly Press in Boston. We represented Little Brown in Canada and in fact managed their Canadian company for them and they published his first book. In any case, I met with Farley before publication to discuss the promotion and publicity of the book and we became right off the bat very good friends and have remained so through the years.

**DT:** What was your first impression when you met Farley?

**JM:** Well first I was impressed with his knowledge of the subject matter, which of course is wolves and the arctic, and I was also impressed by his conviction about his knowledge. The book ran into a lot of criticism from so-called 'northern experts' and wolf experts who disputed many of Farley's contentions but I found that at no point did he have any thought of conceding anything to anybody or of backing down and he has remained that way ever since. I liked his spirit and as I say, we became friends from our first meeting. And Farley was only then beginning to develop into the public persona that he eventually became. And he, by his nature, and in private is shy and a very concerned human being as he is publicly but he tends to be quiet and as I say a bit shy which shocks people because Farley's public persona is anything but shy. I have watched the transition take place over the years and I now think we have reached a point in Farley's life where he doesn't

know which is the private Farley and which is the public Farley and he's living in this body and voice that was devoted to promotion of what he believed in, but very difficult to tell the difference though.

**DT:** Well he blames a lot of that public persona on you. He says that was your fault for getting him to publicize and become the public figure and so on.

**JM:** Well I would concede that part of that is true because I have always felt that if the author isn't going to promote his own book it's not going to be effectively promoted. I think it's essential for an author to appear on television and radio and in person to let the readers or potential readers know that they're dealing with somebody of substance, somebody of conviction and somebody who cares. So it was a natural for Farley and I would have to say that there were times when he has over-developed that public persona. I can think of a number of notable incidents; I can remember one time at a librarians' convention in Quebec City and Farley was starring at the convention and was wearing his kilts at the time and at one of the receptions I remember very vividly, one of the librarians said "Do you wear anything under your kilts?" and Farley said "Of course not!" And on being questioned closely he admitted that he was wearing something under his kilts that night and he said "Well to prove that I am a true Scotsman I will remove them." with which he took off his pants and threw them up in the air where they hooked on a chandelier in the main ballroom at the Chateau Frontenac and hung there for the remainder of the party. I think it may have been the last time Farley wore anything under his kilts publicly. And I remember another occasion when he was autographing books at Eaton's in Toronto, and as you well know at Eaton's in Toronto they don't even sell tobacco, but Farley of course said "If I'm going to autograph books..." and he arrived in his kilts with a bottle of rum in his hand and I said, "You can't have that in here." He said "Do do you want to go ahead with the autographing party or not?" And Eaton's said "Well we've advertised it and promoted it and have a lot of people waiting for your signature Mr. Mowat but we can't have you with a bottle and smoking." And he said, "Well I'm easy. I won't

stay. You have to make your choice." So he sat there in Eaton's smoking with the bottle from which he poured from time to time liberal amounts of rum and everybody had a great time and he offered a drink to several people in the line which made them very happy. And that is Farley, but the public persona has been of interest to me because I think the nature of the man is that he does what he wants to do, he has very very few inhibitions and if he wants to do something very much he will do it. For example, in our sailing days in Newfoundland he would often, when we were driving in a car or a jeep at the time or sailing he would often decide that he wanted to swim. He would simply take off his clothes and would go in bare naked and swim. This was in an isolated area and he used to do this quite repeatedly. Sometime later we had been in Norfolk Virginia. We were planning to commission the building of a steel hulled schooner at that time and coming back from Norfolk we stopped off in Atlantic city en route and here is this beautiful beach with quite a few people around and Farley decided he wanted to have a swim. So without any hesitation he took his clothes off and walked naked down the beach and he swam out to a warning sign that said "Danger Undertow". He swam out and climbed up on this sign and I can still see him swinging back and forth stark naked on this sign and I'm just waiting for the police to arrive to arrest him. Fortunately they didn't, I didn't even go in for a swim, I just kept an alert for the police. But he would have done it and would do it anywhere; he's a free-spirit.

**DT:** Very much so! One thing I'd like to know, well first of all he had to go to the States to get *People of the Deer* published and I'd like to know why did you, a Canadian publisher decide to publish what he'd already had published at that point. Because every one else in Canada including W.O. Mitchel had said 'very nice but no thank you' and Farley had to go to the States to get it published.

**JM:** Well that's right. His first publication was in the U.S.A., no question about that. I don't think he had ever submitted a manuscript to McClelland and Stewart. He had tried to get published but for some reason he hadn't approached us and we were at that time, although he had a number of magazine articles published, we were

literally not aware of Farley as far as I can recall. But - and this is an interesting story - he of course wanted us, after the first book, to originate all his books in Canada simultaneously with the American edition and I had a problem with that because Little, Brown & Co., from Boston were very very important to us. I wasn't about to steal the author, so for a period he was published in a separate Canadian edition but it was Little, Brown Canada. So he was being technically published in Canada but still it was an American-owned company. We owned 40% of the company but finally we went through a period when we published under the McClelland and Stewart imprint but I was still keeping Little, Brown happy conveying a substantial amount of the profit to them behind the scenes. Farley finally put his foot down and we settled the matter with Boston and ever since then McClelland and Stewart have originated his books simultaneously with the Atlantic Monthly Press. So that has worked very well and Farley's had, as you know, an enormous publishing record and he's done probably better than any other Canadian author internationally. It's a matter of dispute because some Canadian authors have done very very well. I don't know how many languages. I think he's been translated into 17 languages and his books have been major successes everywhere from Russia of course and most of the European countries. And he's one of the few Canadian authors who is of international reputation and well-known throughout the world and he deserves it. I couldn't say this when I was a publisher because I had a lot of authors I was responsible for but I can now say that I think Farley - without any question in my opinion - is the most important writer we've ever had in Canada, the best writer and has had a greater influence for the good on people whether it's the environmentalists or whatever. I would pick him as - to date - the single most important Canadian author that's ever lived and that from a man who can't punctuate, whose spelling is atrocious and whose grammar is not all that good. Although, the tone to his writing is such that his grammatical errors in the manuscript are easily corrected, but he has a feeling for dialogue for one thing, he has a great ear and just writes beautifully, but it's the tone of his writing that just sets him aside. But he can't spell and that should give encouragement to a lot of people out there who can't spell very well who want to write.

**DT:** Was *The Regiment* the first book of Farley's that you published under the McClelland and Stewart imprint?

**JM:** Well *The Regiment* as I recall may have been the first book under the imprint. It's funny, Farley was very diffident about *The Regiment* when he submitted it, he felt that it was a book that we probably wouldn't want to publish and might require a subsidy. It didn't and it was a great book. It was one of his more important works and is still in print today as I guess all his books are. I think that we reacted so favourably, I'm not sure that *The Regiment* wasn't published as well in Boston I'm simply not sure of that, I think perhaps it was but we did publish it as a McClelland and Stewart book but whether it was the first one or not I couldn't say.

**DT:** What was the initial printing number of *People of The Deer* when you first published that?

**JM:** My recollection would be that the first printing in Boston was probably on the order of 10 000 copies and I think our initial importation of the book was probably, and I'm guessing, of the 10 000 maybe 2000 copies or 2500 maximum but *People of The Deer* went through a great many printings and has continued to sell to this day. The so-called academics and critics that did a lot of nit-picking with the book, they were actually helping the book along with free publicity and controversy and if anything sells books as Salman Rushdi knows, it's controversy.

**DT:** Have you read all of Farley's books?

**JM:** Oh yeah!

**DT:** And which is your favourite?

JM: My favourite book of Farley's is *The Boat Who Wouldn't Float*. But there's a reason for that apart from the fact that I am in the book and it's made me known to school children right across the country because it's been on many courses of study. Quite apart from that, the reason that it's my favourite book is that having lived through two thirds of the book with Farley I can read it and see a master craftsman at work. I guess I learned more about the technique and art of writing from that book than from anything else I've ever read. And the reason for it and the key thing that I've learned is, well there are two or three lessons from the book but one - Farley and I think he coined the phrase - he says that I believe in truth not fact and he does. Which means that in writing a book he may make minor factual changes, he might move a dramatic scene from here to here for the purpose of emphasis it doesn't change the truth of the thing, it does change the fact and it would drive an historian mad because historians believe that fact is everything. But that is one thing that I learned more from that book than any of his other books but the other thing was his ability to underplay an incident or scene when it would come under the heading of Truth Being Stranger Than Fiction because he knows that the reader would never accept it as credible; whereas he will build up a very minor incident into either a very dramatic or very funny scene. And this is a skill which is given only to the great craftsmen and great writers, but I could see it at work because I had been there and I'll give you an example of that. When we finally got *The Boat Who Wouldn't Float* ready for our first venture to sea on a trial we were in a small Newfoundland out-port and we had been living with these people and knew them all. And they were all lined up to watch these newcomers take this schooner out, and they were all sea-people, and they were waiting to laugh. And Farley describes it in the book, he says, "We sailed out of the harbour backwards". Well we didn't sail out of the harbour backwards but we *felt* as though we were. We felt so inept and so nervous in front of this professional audience that we might as well have been sailing the boat out backwards. But that is the sort of point I've made, where Farley believes in truth not fact, and the truth was we felt as if we were sailing the boat out backwards.

**DT:** I was wondering with all the talk about free trade in the last election and so on, do you think that that's going to be beneficial for Farley's books sales or not?

**JM:** I don't think it will affect Farley as far as his books are concerned. He sells very well today in the United States and has done for years and sells very well on this side of the border and I think that that will continue. He will be published in Boston or he will be published in Toronto, so I don't think that free trade will affect that in any way except that it does affect Farley emotionally. And probably more so than most of our population, in that I would not describe Farley as anti-American in any way, he is a strong and has a long record as being one of the strongest and most caring Canadian nationalists. I think he feels much as I feel that a little bit of his heritage has been drained away and that this free trade and the results of free trade are going, over a period of years, to be insidious and damaging to the future of Canada as an independent nation.

**DT:** But it won't have any effect on his sales?

**JM:** On the books per se, no. I don't think it'll affect them at all. And as you know Farley cannot go down to the States in person to promote his books anymore. He has said that the President has to send Air Force One to pick him up and fly him to Washington for a reception or he won't ever go back into the United States. And he won't, and I don't think the President's going to send Air Force One to pick him up.

**DT:** No I don't think so. Do you think that that's still the case with a new President and all the time that's gone by since 1985. Do you think that if he decided to go to the States they *really* seriously wouldn't let him in or could he just slip through and they'd turn a blind eye?

**JM:** I would believe that he is on the banned list and once you're on the banned list, at customs and immigration they have long memories and the whole thing is

computerized and they're going to turn it up and they're not going to let him in. And I'm sure that unless somebody raised a lot of fuss about it, and Farley's not about to, I think he will remain on the banned list forever. I just don't see an American President sending Air Force One and inviting him down for an official apology. So he's perfectly happy not to go back to the United States. He's got enough things to do without that. And they tape television stuff for book promotion and radio interviews so it's covered. I know that in the book that came after that whole incident, we had planned to have a meeting on the Peace Bridge. Farley would go half way across the bridge with American media on one side and Canadian media on the other. I don't know if that ever came off or not, I've simply forgotten.

**DT:** He told them to stuff it.

**JM:** Well there we are. I guess he had forgotten that it was my suggestion and my idea or I would have told him to stuff it and get there. It would have been a great promotional stunt.

**DT:** Well that's typical of Farley.

Why do you think he writes what he does? He's a very distinctive writer. He's one of the few people who seems to write about indigenous peoples and animals in the way that he does. Why is that do you think?

**JM:** I think that the best answer I could give to that is that he cares very much about animal life, about the world of nature. I don't know of anybody who cares more. He after all, had training as a biologist, but he cares very much about nature, about animals, about the sea, the fish and whatnot and people he is more selective of. I wouldn't say that he loves his fellow man particularly. He loves some fellow man. He is selective in that area. So I think his range of interests sort of stops when it comes to the majority of people. But it's logical for him to write about fish and to

write about Newfoundland, (he loves Newfoundland even though he left there under unfortunate circumstances) to write about whales, to write about the sea, write about native people and the arctic. These are all things, it's his way of life. Civilization is not close to his heart and if you look at his place in Cape Breton, it's set away from everybody else and has a beautiful open way to the sea. And he's always sought places that give him a reasonable amount of solitude. He has lived in Toronto from time to time. Then he started writing he lived in Palgrave, Ontario. Much of Farley stems from his father. He's certainly his father's man in that his father was a very rare character of a highly individualistic nature particularly of a librarian. The thing that turned Farley into a naturalist I think and into a great writer was that background. Because as a boy his father kept being moved and they moved from place to place over the years and I think as a result of that that Farley did not make as many friends, because very often he was the new boy in town, as he would normally have made and you can sort of trace that in writers in that most of the great writers for one reason or another have tended to live a lonely childhood. And what the effect of that is, is to turn them to books and they start reading and if they start reading when they're very young, it's great advice for parents everywhere if you want your children to be writers, creative artists, leaders in whatever field of life then make sure they acquire the reading habit when they're very young. The problem with that is that today I gather that many of the Yuppie families are sort of force feeding their children to read and that's a hell of a way to get them to read. They've got to be encouraged by excellent imaginative teachers and a lot of caring on the part of their parents themselves. That is the background that produced Farley Mowat. I loved Angus (his father) I spent a lot of time with Angus, travelling with him and sailing with him and he was truly a remarkable man.

**DT:** Yeah I've gathered that. In what ways has Farley Mowat been a difficult writer/man to work with?

**M:** I would not ever describe him as such. I have found him easy to work with and very conscious of deadlines although he can have a problem because he is the type of

person who, well you know, you have writers who say ok I'm going to write 1, 2 or three hours every day of the week and eventually it'll end up as a book. Farley is not like that, he's a disciplined person but he has to get a total feel for the subject. Work it out in his head and when he's got it right then he starts writing at a white heat. He starts writing very quickly and what he turns out at that point is invariably very good and often very funny if it's not a serious work. I could not describe Farley as a difficult person to work with in any respect I think he's quite the opposite. I think he's an easy person, although you know he doesn't suffer fools willingly and you can have problems in that area with him. On the whole I think he's very easy to work with and predictable in professional terms. He's not predictable in other terms.

**DT:** Farley said in an article recently that he spends only half as much time writing now and has no real compulsion to write anymore. He also said that his work will have no long term effects and will not change anything in a major way. Do you think this is true and why do you think Farley feels this way?

**JM:** As to whether I think it's true his work will not change people, I disagree categorically with him. I think he's being modest or playing a game when he says that because I think he must realize that particularly the younger readers are inevitably going to benefit from reading Mowat for decades and centuries to come in my opinion. And they're going to learn the art of caring, the love of nature, the many lessons that his books contain for children. I think whole generations of other writers and caring people are going to be the results of his books. As to his writing today, he had many things he wanted to complete as a writer. He's always had a lot of subjects that interested him, that he wanted at some point to execute. And I think that is probably gone, that compulsive sort of determination to work full time at his writing. What he's planning to do now is write his memoirs, and I think that they're much less important to him than the books he has already written. He's like I am, he's getting on and I don't think his energy level is much depleted, but I think the drive and compulsion are probably much softened. I'm not

expecting him to be in any hurry to produce new books, although he has a book coming this fall and a book coming next fall, and by then he'll have a book for the next year which will be the first volume of his memoirs.

**DT:** Has his stand on environmental issues changed over the years? Has he become more vehement or has he mellowed do you think?

**JM:** He thinks he has mellowed and I think he has probably mellowed a bit, in fact, but not in principle. He can still get tremendously exercised and tremendously outspoken about any given subject and if some government or a private group steps out of line in terms of what he believes, well he's there front and centre for outrageous statements. In that sense he's as colourful as ever but he's not actively pursuing causes and I think the fires are banked a little bit but I don't think the principles have changed.

**DT:** Good. His books haven't been studied at the university level anywhere that I know of and he seems to be totally ignored by the academic world. Why do you think that that's the case? Why do you think nobody's done a thesis on him before now?

**JM:** That's a very good and astute question. I would say that it is true. I think in the English language and literature courses in Canada and the Can-Lit courses, they have at the University level tended to completely ignore a man, who as I say, I consider to be our greatest writer. Part of it has to do with the fact that Farley has never written a novel per se, and the Can-Lit people concentrate on the novel. It's the great written art form and there is a level of intellectual snobbery attached to that that sickens me. My belief is that the academics will come to their senses in time. Probably not in Farley's lifetime, it will come after his death and there will be a re-evaluation and a re-awakening. My God they have Canadian novels as required reading in these University courses across the country and many of these authors don't even belong in the same room as Farley! I mean they're not in the same category and it all in my opinion links to that major point. He's not a novelist,

he's written children's books, he's written essentially reference books, he's written just about every category but he hasn't written a novel and he's excluded. But by and large the academics treat Pierre Berton the same way. Now the historians are grudgingly beginning to admit that Pierre knows something about history, but it'll come to Farley. Fortunately our schools systems have been better advised and a lot of the Mowat books have been used throughout elementary and secondary schools and they continue to be used there. So the kids when they grow up, they know who Farley Mowat is and have read some of his books. So he is getting read at that level which is more important to my way of thinking than being read at the university level anyway.

**DT:** That's exactly what he had to say. He felt it was far more important for them to be read there because there they had an affect as opposed to being dissected and then forgotten.

**JM:** Yeah. And I think that's a plus. But it is true he has been the victim of intellectual snobbery and they will have to re-evaluate that.

**DT:** Has he contributed to Canada's understanding of Canada as a nation?

**JM:** Oh God yes! All his books show a love of Canada. They don't necessarily show a love of all Canadian institutions, mainly government. They all show a deep love of Canada and yes I think he's had a great deal to do with making, certainly our children (he's been widely read by adults too), making them aware of the potentials of Canada, the natural richness of the country. When you come back to environmental concerns and conservation I don't think anybody has had such a profound effect as Farley in those terms.

**DT:** Do you think his books have changed Canadian's views of Canada?

**JM:** Well that is a very difficult question to answer. I haven't any doubt that Farley has influenced a lot of people to care about being Canadian as compared to being an international citizen or a vassal of the United States. I would think he has influenced a lot of people in that direction because as I say, he was an early advocate of an independent Canada long before any formal movement of any scale was begun in this country. I think back to Walter Gordon who was a great Canadian, a great patriot; but he was really the first one in our time to start a formal movement, to do something about the continental attitudes and now that's gone with Brian Mulroney but it'll come back is my belief unless Free Trade makes it impossible to recover. And that's another scenario that you have to consider.

**DT:** Has Farley ever brought you anything that you refused to publish?

**JM:** No. I can't think of anything that we have refused to publish. No, I don't think that he has. He writes poetry and I don't think we had any great interest in publishing any of his poetry.

**DT:** How many drafts does he usually bring you? How much editing do his works have to go through before you put it to bed?

**JM:** That's an interesting question. How many drafts Farley goes through before he submits a manuscript is something he alone could answer. But I know that his initial draft can be a real mess in that, he's not a very good typist. He types his own manuscripts and he's an appallingly bad typist and he will type a page and then correct it and it's a total mess. My guess is he then goes to a second draft, then corrects that then turns that over to his typist. And when we see it it needs editing and needs copy editing and Farley has always been reasonably amenable to intelligent suggestions. He's had the one key editor working with him ever since *People of the Deer*, and that is Peter Davison who was head of the book division at Atlantic Monthly Press. He has been the prime editor. And for many years now a woman by the name of Lilly Miller at McClelland and Stewart has been Farley's

Canadian editor and the two of them would work together. Lilly would go over her views and send them simultaneously to Peter Davison and Farley, and Peter would direct the final draft unless there was a divergence. And some of his books are different in the Canadian version than in the American version, not many of them. I don't think he's one of those writers who goes through eight or ten drafts before he has something polished. By the time he's ready to put it on paper I think he has a fair notion of what he wants to say and how he wants to say it.

**DT:** So what the reader sees is pretty much verbatim?

**JM:** Yeah. I think Farley, if he ever brought himself to it, (which I think is unlikely) but I think if he ever started dictating he could probably write a hell of a lot more quickly and turn tapes over to his secretary. But I will say one thing, he has had trouble on occasion grasping the form of presentation of a particular book. A case in point would be the *Boat Who Wouldn't Float*, because I know he went through 4 or 5 failed attempts to put it together conceptually and then it suddenly came to him and he wrote it very quickly.

**DT:** What do you think is Farley's longevity? When he passes on or out of the public eye do you think his books are going to follow?

**JM:** No! No I think there will be an instant revival, and I think most of his books will be in print 100 years from now. Not all of them but most of them. You look at somebody like Leacock, and Leacock still sells today, one of the few Canadian authors who does. Well Ella Montgomery, Leacock, Service, Mazo De L'Roche to a degree but a declining degree, some authors live on and are as widely read today as are any of the contemporary authors and Farley will be one of them. Margaret Laurence is another, her books sell something like 50 000 copies a year in Canada every year since her death. They were selling that well before she died but it's very interesting when you look at that type of number to realize how important she really was. In the sense that you publish a new book in Canada if

you sell 2500 copies you're very lucky, and her books go on 50 000 copies a year for each one of them.

**DT:** Have all of Farley's books been in continuous print?

**JM:** Yes. Except one book and it's a very expensive book to produce and that is *In The Wake Of The Great Sealers*, that he did with David Blackwood. And I have a hunch that it is not.

**DT:** Why was that so expensive to produce?

**JM:** Because David did original art for the book and so it was really the first showcase for David Blackwood's painting and his prints and whatnot.

**DT:** Which has been the best seller?

**JM:** Oh God. I couldn't answer that. It could be *People Of The Deer*, it may well be *People Of The Deer*, it may be *Never Cry Wolf*. I simply don't know that, I should know it but I don't. Probably in total numbers, *The Dog Who Wouldn't Be* may well be, or *Owls In The Family* might well be the top-selling book of Farley's.

**DT:** Do you know which is the poorest seller of all his books?

**JM:** No I don't know that but I would think that his Arctic Trilogy might, and that had a lot of Mowat writing in it but was essentially work from arctic explorers and I would think that those, there were three of them, would probably be among the slowest sellers but they're not pure Mowat. Although they're very very good books indeed.

**DT:** Umhmm. Do you have any regrets about any of the books he's written, how you handled them or how he wrote them?

**JM:** No, I don't think so. I think my feeling as a publisher throughout the years was always, I think without exception, each one of his books was rather better than I thought it was going to be. And I think back to his earlier years when he wrote the two Atlantic books *Grey Seas Under* and *The Serpent's Coil*. And he was actually commissioned to write a book, and I had organized the deal for him. In fact it was commissioned by the Foundation Company and paid a very good sum to write a book, relating in some way to their activity. And they had no control or editorial say over anything he wrote; he had a free hand. But instead of giving them one book he gave them two super books. I had some concern about that although I liked it from Farley's point of view at that time it was a very very rewarding financial deal and the Foundation people were very generous. Both of them were Book-Of-The-Month selections and so the Foundation Company made a very good investment.

**DT:** It was your suggestion that Farley write Virunga and I was wondering what made you suggest that and what was Farley's response when you approached him with the idea?

**JM:** Ha Ha, funny, I just saw a truck go by outside - Mowat Express, what a coincidence. I'm not aware that I suggested Virunga to him. Virunga was suggested to me by an American publisher who had a connection with the estate of Dian Fossey and I listened to the American publisher and was quite impressed with their concept and ideas and I guess I talked Farley into doing it at that stage, but I have no recollection that he needed much pressure from me. But the idea was not mine; the idea came from Warner Books in the United States at that time. But I thought it was a great idea and the book has done very well.

**DT:** Well it's interesting that you say that he didn't need much persuasion, because when I spoke with him a few weeks ago, he said that if he'd never written Virunga, he says he wouldn't have missed it. He doesn't think it was one of his best books. Although Claire does, she thought it was very good. But why do you think he feels that way and what was your reaction when you saw the finished product?

**JM:** I felt a number of things about the book. One, its subject matter was one that, in principle, was very close to Farley's heart in that Dian Fossey in her own way was a Mowat-like person, who devoted her life to saving these animals in Africa. So from that point of view I think it was a natural but I think Farley had some problems in writing it and the material that was made available to him, and there were some difficult parts of the story. I think a marvelous book resulted and I think the public acceptance of the book is testimony to the fact that the American publisher was right. I didn't know that Farley was so diffident about it and wouldn't have cared if he had written it or not, but it had no Canadian connection effectively and that may have been part of the consideration for him 'cause most of his books have been directly Canadian oriented.

**DT:** Well his big concern was that he felt that he's not a biographer. He says "I'm an autobiographer, I write about myself essentially" and he says "I know I'll never understand the people I write about I'll only be able to do a simulacrum of the person I'm writing about." Sort of a posthumous biography. He was concerned that he could write it and could make it work but it wouldn't be his best thing because he wasn't involved personally.

**M:** Well, to a degree that may be so although my response to that would be that the proof of the pudding is in the eating, and it's a very good book to read, very entertaining and engaging piece of work. So biography is not his first love, I can understand that and it's true that many of his books he has participated in directly and it was a different type of thing for him to do. I think it was worth the effort and as long as the book results, he may not feel it's his best, and I wouldn't name it as his best or most popular book but it's certainly done very, very well and has exceeded all projections.

**DT:** He was quoted by Adrienne Clarkson in an /85 or /88 article, he said that "I have contributed largely to the survival of McClelland And Stewart." I'm just wondering what your response to that is?

**JM:** I would accept that. I think it's true in that Farley was one of the authors who recognized the need to come up with a big book at regular periods to keep us alive and certainly in the earlier days in publishing it was always one of the big publishing problems to have enough major books to carry the season. And God help you in publishing at that time if you came up with a year where your major authors didn't produce something. So I came to count on Farley and Pierre and others to a lesser degree, Peter Newman became very important to us but he did not publish as often or as regularly as either Pierre or Farley or even Margaret Laurence as far as that goes. I don't know how many she wrote all told maybe ten or twelve. But as a publisher you come to count on certain authors and certainly Farley contributed a great deal to the survival of M&S both in its back lists and its front lists.

**DT:** When and why did you first start publishing Farley's books in different languages?

**JM:** We did not publish Farley in other languages, we sold the rights of publication to foreign publishers. I think most of his books have been published in French, and in Italy and Germany and so many other countries. Scandinavian countries are great Mowat devotees. Russia and other Iron Curtain countries have done Mowat editions and in Japan. But we have just been part of the promotion, we were not involved in most publications directly.

**DT:** I see. Why was that started? Who suggested it? Was that your suggestion or his suggestion or did the other publishers come to you?

**JM:** No, that has been going on since time immemorial in the publishing business, that if you have a major book published in English, somebody, whether it be a literary

agent or the publisher itself is going to make an effort to have it translated into other languages simply to expand the market. But that's been going on for 100 or 150 years.

**DT:** I guess that's been very profitable for Farley and you as well.

**JM:** Yes it has. And not particularly profitable for us because we take a very small share of anything like that but it is an important source of continuing income for an author and you know there are some authors who find they make more out of a South American edition or a South African edition of their book than they have made out of Canada which after all is a small country or rather a small population. So I think most writers are anxious to be published internationally but it's part of the trade. The one thing that has changed as far as Canadian writers are concerned is that they now can be known in translation and in foreign countries as Canadian writers whereas for many years they were thought to be American.

**DT:** Are all of his books available in translation?

**JM:** Yeah. But whether they're available in all languages at present is something I couldn't answer.

**DT:** How many languages are there? You mentioned 17 is that about a round number?

**JM:** Oh God knows! I don't even know how many languages there are but I think that by the time you get up to maybe 22 you've got all the available, practical publishing languages. I doubt for example that Farley has ever been published in Hebrew, they tend although there is an active publishing trade in Israel today they tend to be primarily interested in work by Jewish writers and I don't think they ever extended much beyond that interest in Jewish writers. But that's natural.

**DT:** Do you know which has the largest foreign printing?

**JM:** To tell you the truth I haven't any idea. But my recollection is that in Russia they have done some very, very large printings. After all it's a country with a huge population but they've done some massive printings but to put numbers on it I couldn't do it, I don't have that sort of memory or mind. And I would exaggerate if I could think of the number by at least 50%.

**DT:** I'm curious about the whole situation with the INS and *My Discovery of America* as a result of that. Did that book sell well in the States as well as in Canada?

**JM:** It sold very well in the United States. I think it is one of the few Mowat books that sold more copies in total in Canada than in the United States but I don't know that, I don't think I ever saw final figures. But my guess is that in the United States the book went out of print and sort of died without a trace whereas here it has continued in print and still sells.

**DT:** Well Americans don't like criticisms of themselves.

**JM:** No they do not. They're a very sensitive provincial nation.

**DT:** So he's still in the Lookout Book isn't he?

**JM:** Oh yeah, I think he is.

**DT:** Do you think that that's affected his sales positively or negatively here or on the other side of the border?

**JM:** I think it probably affected his sales positively for a period of time here and I think many Canadians admired what he did. I think it probably or its initial effect in the U.S.A. was a plus. In other words a lot of the book reading public in the United States were very sensitive to Farley's position and what had been done to him, but

the book reading population in the United States is a very small percentage of the total population. Americans are not, although they run into big figures on schlock books, they're not known as a reading nation and rank well down the list on a per capita analysis. America is a lowest common denominator country. A person with any intellectual ability is at a premium there. Do I reveal myself as anti American? (Laughter)

**DT:** No I don't think so! Certainly not any more than Farley.

The two parts of my thesis that I'm writing on involve Farley in his role as an environmentalist/naturalist and his other role as a social critic and I'm curious to hear your views as to how you see him in those two roles as an environmentalist and as a social critic.

**JM:** OK. I would say as an environmentalist he is on much safer ground. I mean that is an area of expertise. He has studied the subject area widely and is extremely well informed even exceptionally well informed, and he keeps up to date with what is going on in the world. As a social critic, his very nature is that of a caring human being, I think he's less reliable as a social critic than as a naturalist or environmentalist and I think he would probably concede that.

**DT:** Well he told me that he sees himself more as a critic of antisocial behaviour. He said I'm not interested in criticizing society at large, in detail yes, in specific situation and specific groups, maybe not government and things like that but he feels that he's more of a critic of anti-social behaviour.

**JM:** I guess I wouldn't disagree with that, but I would say that he considers most forms of Government as anti-social behaviours. Something like a temperance movement and again I haven't sounded Farley out on abortion but I believe he's intelligent enough to believe in abortion when it's required and I think that this type of issue group I think he's often appalled by them. And I don't say the abortion group specifically, but I would say a temperance lobby, and anti smoking lobby, do

gooders per se I think he is opposed to instinctively unless their cause is pretty well an earth-mother-type cause. I think the main Mowat area is in the other direction in terms of civilization and the behaviour of society and is appalled by many things that go on. The fires that burn in Mowat are more banked in that area than they are in the environmental area.

**DT:** I think that's obvious too. The critical aspect of it seems to be in conjunction with when he's writing something more dear to his heart than, well he's never gone out to write a book about society and criticize that it's always been in connection with something else he's been writing about.

**JM:** Well that's right. You know whereas if he gets into an anti-seal crusade or an anti-whale-killing crusade, there he's hitting both sides of the social issue but he always comes down on the side of the animal. Although again he has moderated as you suggested earlier some of his views with respect to wolves for example and the killing of wolves which he was at one point adamantly opposed to under any circumstances, I don't think he is opposed to it under any circumstances today. He is a remarkable person.

**DT:** He certainly is. Just a final kind of wrap up piece. We know he's written about you in at least one of his books and in other articles and things he's mentioned humorous situations which the two of you have been involved in and the sort of jokes you've played on each other over the years. Tell me just a couple of the most memorable situations that the two of you have been involved in which have stuck in your memory.

**JM:** I haven't given that much thought. Off the top of my head I would think of the time he was turned back at the American border. He came directly from Malten to my place in Klineburg and that was a high for us while we were planning the retaliatory public relations and publicity moves and were on the phone for about 36 hours non-stop. Our trip to Norfolk Virginia was memorable in that we landed in Norfolk

and had to drive to some place to see this boat builder. We rented a car and we were on this lonely back road in Virginia and we came to an intersection, no traffic lights nothing and I wanted to have a better look at the sign to see where we should be going and somehow I managed to put the car into the ditch and we couldn't get out of the ditch. So Farley, who on this trip happened to be wearing his kilts as it happened, decided to go for help. And I said I would no more walk down this road looking for help than I would fly to the moon. But he was going for help, and I said I'm going to wait in the car and wait until somebody comes along and then we'll get the help. So Farley walked off with a bottle of rum in his hand and as dawn approaches (this was maybe 3 or 4 in the morning), as dawn approached here was this little kilted figure walking along with this bottle of rum looking nothing so much as a Johnny Walker Commercial and the dogs and the kids in the neighborhood - all black - wondered what in God's name was this walking down the road and started following him and Farley just kept on going. Meanwhile a towtruck had come along and he pulled me out and caught up with Farley in the morning. But I still remember this strange apparition on the highways of Virginia, I don't think they've ever seen anything like that.

**DT:** And he never did get any help did he?

**JM:** No, no he did not. But we've been good friends for a long time and we used to have lunch together once a week for a long period of time down at the North Peak Hotel down in Toronto. Farley was living in Palgrave at the time.

**DT:** How many awards has Farley Mowat won?

**JM:** Oh God I don't know. I would guess maybe half a dozen or so at least half a dozen Governor General's Awards would be my guess. I couldn't be specific about it however. He couldn't care less about them but what he does enjoy is appearing on high state occasions and acting Farley Mowat and embarrassing people along the way. Have I given you enough?

**DT:** That's more than enough! Thank you very much Mr. McClelland for your time I really appreciate it.

**JM:** Well I hope it's useful to you.

**DT:** I think it will be.